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Staff perceptions of the Teaching
Excellence Framework (TEF) in a
post-92 institution.

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EdD 2019

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all of my participants for their undivided attention and without whom this thesis would not be possible. Thank you so much.

I would like to thank my supervisory team for their continuous support, patience, discussions and feedback over this period. I am extremely grateful for the support I have received from Professor Mark Langan (Director of Studies), Dr Michaela Harrison and Dr Mark Peace.

I am appreciative to Manchester Metropolitan University for funding and providing the opportunity to study towards the Doctor of Education qualification, and my faculty for their support throughout the EdD process. It is only when you complete a doctoral thesis that it becomes apparent that it is impossible to do so, without the support of so many people. I have been lucky to have been supported by numerous colleagues and friends along this journey.

And finally, my family without whom none of this thesis would have been written, for their unconditional support. My wonderful husband Kevin and my daughter, Dina

<3 xx

Abstract

The Higher Education and Research Act (2017) marked a substantive change to the UK Higher Education (HE) landscape. The Act purported to strengthen the value of quality teaching through the creation of the metricised Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). TEF has since impacted significantly on policy and strategic decision-making within HEIs, but there remains limited research into the views of academic staff on their perceptions of the impacts of the framework.

This interpretivist study focused on a post-92 institution shortly after it received its first TEF award. In-depth, semi structured interviews conducted with nine academics, each interviewed twice, during two distinct periods of the 'TEF2' and 'TEF3' awards. Thematic analysis identified several key areas that influenced academic viewpoints, relating to staff development, metrics, accountability and marketisation. Participants' main concerns centred around their 'readiness' for the TEF and a need for an institutional commitment to staff development in order to enhance teaching quality. The motives behind the introduction of the TEF were broadly welcomed, due to the acknowledgment of the importance of teaching. However, concerns were expressed that its implementation was a regulatory mechanism, with participants interpreting this as an extension of accountability culture within HE. The narratives are contextualised using Foucault's views of neo-liberal governmentality and associated fetishization of metrics. This type of environment is already present in other public sector organisations, driven by competition for desirable metric outcomes.

The research concludes that the TEF had profound impacts on both managed academics and academic managers. It was perceived as a means to further solidify

the move towards marketisation of HE, through over-simplified categorisation of institutions creating a form of governmentality that employed discipline power to achieve metric outcomes. The framework was viewed as an overall negative contribution to HE as it contributes to a culture of dataveillance and performance management, underpinned by discipline power.

List of abbreviations

BIS	Business of Innovation and Skills (Government department)
DoE	Department of Education
DHLE	Destination of Higher Education Leavers
ERA	Education Reform Act
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
OfS	Office for Students
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for Education
HESA	Higher Education Statistical Agency
HERA	Higher Education Research Act
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEPI	Higher Education Policy Institute
NSS	National Student Survey
OBPM	Outcome Based Performance Management
PM	Performance Management
REF	Research Excellence Framework
SAC	Student as Consumer
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework ¹
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
UCAS	The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

¹ The Office for Student renamed the Teaching Excellence Framework to Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework, however the acronym of TEF remains the same.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

To provide context to this thesis I will provide an insight into why this research was conducted, and how this resulted in the academic aims for this study. I will position the work in the context of the UK Higher Education (HE) landscape at the time of the inception of this research. This chapter commences with an overview of my academic background and experience, which in turn will outline my position in relation to this research. Secondly, it will acknowledge some of the most influential external factors that are affecting HE in the UK, which Beech (2018a:1) describes as ‘turbulent political times’ for UK universities. The exploration of this dynamic landscape will underpin the rationale for this research. This chapter concludes with an overview of the thesis structure and content.

1.1 My career as an academic in HE

The recent turbulent political times for universities in the UK (Moran & Powell, 2018; Coughlan, 2018a) are evident in my own career. My entry into HE in September 2010 as a new lecturer with no prior teaching experience, and subsequent appointment as programme leader just three years later, is coupled with significant events that have irreversibly changed the HE landscapes in the UK. These are summarised in table 1.

Table 1: Significant events in HE over the 10-year period of my career in Higher Education.

Note my appointment as Programme Leader occurred in June 2013.

Date	Significant events in HE
October 2010	Browne review is published, making recommendations on the future of fees policy and financial support
September 2012	First cohort of students now paying £9,000 tuition fees
September 2015	Recruitment cap lifted on student numbers
June 2016	Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF1) pilot introduced
September 2016	Maintenance grants replaced with maintenance loans
June 2016	UK votes to leave the European Union
March 2017	Parliament passes the Higher Education and Research Act
June 2017	Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF2) institutional awards announced
September 2017	Tuition fees increase to £9,250
February 2018	Prime Minister announces Higher Education review
June 2018	TEF3 outcomes announced
May 2019	Augar review on post-18 funding is announced

I have deliberately chosen to present this timeline to make clear the impact upon my position. I entered HE just after the Browne review and 3 years later I was responsible for managing a large programme. Events unfolding around me had an impact on how I worked, what I did and even resulted in strong perceptions of changes to my identity as an academic.

I have always had a longstanding ambition to teach. However, I did not join the profession until the age of 36, and then as a university lecturer and not a schoolteacher, which is the career I had originally wanted. I graduated in 1995, having completed a degree that I did not particularly enjoy and ‘accidentally stumbled’ upon an opportunity to work as an events assistant. As I progressed through my career, the next 15 years in the events industry were fun, engaging, and lucrative for me, both in terms of status and finance. When the opportunity arose to combine my

expertise of events management with my desire to teach, it was a 'dream come true'. My new role as a lecturer in events management was what I considered to be perfect, as I had wanted to teach and now, I was doing exactly just that.

I had a clear preconceived notion of teaching at university; moulding inquisitive minds with engaging narratives and dialogue with attentive students. I imagined students listening 'to my every word' and being an inspiration for the next generation of event professionals. Indeed, those moments were at times a reality and as such highly rewarding. However, I was not prepared for what I consider to be the brutal reality of teaching within HE. I had anticipated the workload, but it was more intense than I had foreseen and demotivating. I had accepted a decrease in salary and dealt with being provided with an old unit handbook and told to write 24 lectures and seminars on my first day, despite having no teaching experience at all. However, I had not predicted how teaching in half-filled lecture theatres would make me feel. I was informed by some students that they would attend when they wanted to attend, 'they had paid' after all. Other students were stuck in a cycle of working long hours to cover basics such as rent and food, which meant not engaging and, in many cases, subsequently failing. I was demoralised. My fantasy of the occupation did not mirror the reality I was experiencing. I had to quickly reconsider what my role was or should be and re-evaluate my identity as a lecturer.

I have always maintained that I will not judge my students and am here to teach them without prejudice. I will do my best to facilitate their opportunities to reach their potential and help as much as possible with circumstances that are not under my

control. I focused on creativity and innovation, for example creating supportive podcasts, online forums and formative assessments for absent students. Following the adage of ‘necessity is the mother of invention’, I found my creativity flourishing, something I link to my deteriorating hearing, (to the extent that I now have around 70% hearing loss). I was now not only a new lecturer, but I was also a deaf lecturer. Yet, my disability was my advantage as my approaches and adaptations worked, reflected by my internal unit satisfaction scores and externally by teaching nominations. My original fantasy of what teaching would be like had left me demoralised, however at this point I considered myself to be both successful and confident in my role. I had achieved what I wanted to as a lecturer and fulfilled a long-held ambition to teach, albeit in a different way to what I had previously thought. After three years of teaching, I was a Programme Leader. A senior manager informally inducted me into my new role; the main things I was required to achieve can be paraphrased as follows:

<i>What the senior manager said:</i>	<i>Translation:</i>
• ‘Make sure we get bums on seats’	Recruitment
• ‘Make sure we keep them’	Retention
• ‘Make sure they all pass’	Progression
• ‘Make sure they are all happy’	Satisfaction
• ‘Make sure they all get good jobs’	Employability

My decision to provide the language that was used by the senior manager is intentional as it demonstrates the casual nature of how my role was described to me. The language used includes terms such as ‘them’ and ‘they’ to refer to students. In my opinion, this downgrades how students are perceived and the terminology also reduces the seriousness of the role itself. I suggest that it makes the role of

programme leader superficial and one focused on delivering key performance indicators as a priority, rather than enabling students to succeed. My role was explicitly governed by 'managing metrics' and I have fulfilled these requirements, but as a consequence I have struggled personally and professionally. It has led to conflict in my academic identity, as I was trying to manage many factors that were outside of my control. My obsession with meeting metric targets resulted in a what I consider to be a 'loss of sight' in terms of my role as a (humanistic and supportive) lecturer. My reflections are that decision-making was constrained to consider how my actions would impact my targets. Teaching no longer felt like my core function, and the pressures of these targets caused me anxiety that resulted in being signed off work.

I have since questioned what the metrics mean in relation to their validity, and my own role in ensuring that I am managing and achieving these metrics. I have wrestled with my own identity and role as a lecturer, with my overriding default position being to 'do right by my students' and to be reminded of the diverse range of issues facing my students. I subsequently gained an interest in the impacts of neoliberal ideologies within HE and this coincided with the development of the Higher Education and Research Act. This meant that the REF (Research Excellence Framework) was now accompanied by the creation of the TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework) which was being mooted as a turning point in UK HE (Department of Business, skills and innovation, 2016). The TEF would utilise existing metrics outlined in table 2.

Table 2: TEF metrics data

- Student satisfaction with teaching on their course
- Student satisfaction with academic support
- Student satisfaction with assessment and feedback
- Student retention
- Employability or further study (6 months after graduation)
- Highly skilled employment or further study (6 months after graduation)

(Source: The Office for Students, 2018a:5)

My role as programme leader was already focused on managing metrics, and these metrics were now the components of the TEF. Thus, I wanted to explore further the impacts of the TEF as the schema comprised the elements of the measures of HE that had impacted on me so greatly. I had already struggled with conflict as a lecturer and confusion over my identity as an academic. I wanted to explore the TEF, in terms of its potential impacts on HE particularly in terms of, how academics perceived it. This was strongly linked to my want for the best HE environment for my students to succeed.

1.2 Research questions

The focus of this thesis is to examine the impact of a high-profile component of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 - the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). I will explore the views of academic staff with different roles to provide a range of institutional perspectives, in this case from a post-92 institution. One group are programme leaders (managed-academics) and the second group are senior managers with management responsibilities (academic-managers). This study represents a unique opportunity to reflect on perceptions of the processes of change,

in terms of the learning and teaching practices within a HE institution at the time of the TEF implementation.

The research aims of this study are to explore academic staff perceptions of the Teaching Excellence Framework. The research has the following objectives:

- To explore knowledge of, interpretation of and attitudes towards the TEF award through practitioner accounts within a single institution.
- To investigate the TEF in the wider context of neoliberalism within higher education through perceptions of its manifestation within academic practice.
- To interpret participants' views of TEF using Foucault's theoretical frameworks of power.

1.2.1 Structure of this thesis

I will outline the structure of this thesis with an explanation of the way that the chapters have been constructed. Overall, the thesis has five chapters, with chapter four broken down into four sub-chapters. The structure and content of the thesis evolved over the course of the research journey and do not reflect the order they were written. The chapters are ordered as follows; research background, literature review, methodology, data analysis and finally conclusions.

The aim of **chapter 1**, first chapter is to set the scene and provide context for this research. I was keen to present my personal position, which subsequently explains the inspiration for this study. This chapter draws substantially on the background literature and culminates in the research questions. In order to establish the context of this research the current environment of HE is discussed, focusing on a range of external factors that are affecting UK HEIs.

An analysis of key literature can be found in **chapter 2**. The range of literature is deliberately broad and historical, including analysis of previous governmental reviews, acts of Parliament, with a focus on the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, from which the TEF is derived. I have explored how educational policy has changed over the last 60 years. This led me to include literature on the impact of neoliberalism, both upon society and within HE, drawing parallels with secondary education. Consequently, the chapter also highlights some of the aspects of a marketised HE, reflecting the impact of neoliberal policies. Foucault's work on the notion of power within society provided the theoretical framework for this study and the chapter critically analyses some of Foucault's key concepts, including governmentality and disciplinary power.

The research methodology is described in **chapter 3**, outlining the epistemological rationale behind this research to support the choice of methodology and methods used. Here the design of the study is presented alongside characteristics of the participants. Within this chapter I have also explained how Foucault's framework will be utilised during the subsequent thematic analysis.

Whilst **chapter 4** is the data analysis section for the thesis, owing to the volume and complexity of themes arising, this section is presented as four sub-chapters (**sections 4.1 to 4.5**). Within each sub-chapter, data have been presented in the form of excerpts from participants interviews. I have also taken the opportunity to introduce new literature, which reflects some of the wider issues that were identified from the data presented from participants interviews. My rationale for including new

literature at this point was to uncover and contextualise some of the complexities of the TEF, which were unravelling during the data analysis process. These sections also revisit Foucault's theoretical frameworks of power, which are overlaid to the analysis outcomes contributing to the depth of meaning.

The thesis concludes with **chapter 5**, which presents a critical discussion and reflection on the outcomes by contextualising the findings in light of the literature. Within this chapter I have presented a critique of literature that explicitly explores the TEF, partly to demonstrate the scant literature available, but mainly to highlight how this research and its outcomes fits into existing research. Arising from the data analysis themes, I have created models depicting the TEF and its wider impacts alongside Foucault's theoretical framework of power. The possibilities of further research, the contribution to knowledge within higher education research, and my own personal reflections conclude this chapter.

1.3 External factors affecting UK Higher Education

'It's been a bad year for universities', was the headline of a BBC news article (Coughlan, 2018a: online), reflecting on the outgoing year. Parliament passed the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, which represented a major shake-up of Higher Education. Hall (2018: online) writing for the Guardian Higher Education, highlights how some institutions described themselves as a 'single policy change away from collapse'. Swain (2018) summed up the feeling within HE institutions, highlighting an underlying current of uncertainty, reaching 'tipping points' in some

cases. Writing for HEPI, the universities independent think tank, Beech (2018b) outlined some unanswered questions about events in HE, summarised in table 3.

Table 3: Main issues impacting HE in the UK in 2018

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The future funding of higher education in England;• The implications of Brexit on international staff and student recruitment UK-wide;• The growing future demand for (full-time) higher education and how best to provide for it;• The declining demand for part-time higher education and how best to fix it;• The increasing pressure on institutions to demonstrate 'value for money'• The creation of truly inclusive institutions, which will ensure everyone who aspires to a higher education can access it, participate in it and succeed. |
|--|

(Source: Beech 2018b)

There was significant discord in the sector. At this time, lecturer strikes at USS member institutions (mainly 'traditional' universities) over pension disputes had halted teaching and marking. Universities were in uproar with accusations of McCarthyism, over a Conservative MP's request to be provided with teaching materials or courses relating to Brexit (Fazackerley, 2017; Mason, 2017). There was an accompanying series of HE ministerial changes. Jo Johnson, the minister charged with progressing the Higher Education and Research Act through parliament, was removed and replaced by Sam Gyimah who was subsequently replaced by Chris Skidmore, who was then replaced by Jo Johnson for a second term, but then subsequently resigned to be replaced by Chris Skidmore for his second term. The Universities and Sciences minister post had seven appointments in five years, since David Willets left in 2014. Theresa May announced a review for Higher Education, which was delivered in her final weeks as PM, with Boris Johnson replacing her. This all placed universities and higher education into the news and at the forefront of

some debates. A description of this dynamic environment is necessary to acknowledge that the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 was introduced during extremely challenging times, which may have an impact on what the act set out to achieve and its future success.

1.3.1 Higher Education Review

During the 2017 General Election campaigns, university tuition fees became a surprise election issue. The opposition leader, Jeremy Corbyn, included as part of the Labour Party manifesto a promise to abolish fees. The manifesto clearly stated that ‘Labour will reintroduce maintenance grants for university students and we will abolish university tuition fees’ (The Labour Party, 2017: 43). It should be noted that higher education occupies just one page of the 126-page manifesto document. Although not specified, the funding mechanism was anticipated to be general taxation, despite the fact that this manifesto pledge would cost the government, indeed any government, an estimated £11.2 billion (Morgan, 2017a). Should this pledge have been implemented this would have resulted in a funding gap, since current university funding is £5.74 billion (Conlon, 2017), and that only represents the cost for English universities. This contentious manifesto pledge proved fruitful since support in student rich seats contributed to an increase in Labour’s popularity (Morgan, 2017b). This could be considered unsurprising, given that the policy was credited with a 53% approval rating for those aged 18-24 years. In addition to fees, students are faced with maintenance loans and high interest rates accrued on fees. Universities UK suggested a reintroduction of maintenance grants as opposed to

loans, to address the impact of interest rates accruing from when students start their course (Universities UK, 2018a). These events put pressure on the Prime Minister to announce a review of student finance and university funding – the post-18 review. The aim of the review was to ascertain ‘better value’ for students, but ‘completely scrapping tuition fees’ (Coughlan, 2018b) was ruled out due to perceived harm to universities.

After considerable delay the review of post-18 education and funding report, known as the Augar review, was released at the end of May 2019. As anticipated, it recommended that fees be reduced to £7,500 per year, with the re-introduction of student maintenance grants. These recommendations, if accepted, would be introduced for the 2021/22 academic year. Further analysis of the Augar review in more detail can be found in Chapter 2.

1.3.2 Brexit

At the time of writing this, Brexit (‘British Exit’ from the European Union) discussions are still in progress and subject to change. This followed the UK’s EU referendum on 23rd June 2016 which saw the UK vote to leave the European Union. Therefore, this section is correct at the time of writing, but will rapidly become outdated, depending on how Brexit discussions progress. At the heart of the principles of the European Union is the right of free movement of EU nationals across 28-member states. This instantly posed a problem for UK universities surrounding the rights of their European staff and students. Moran and Powell (2018: 17) highlighted key concerns

for universities in the Brexit era as staff and student recruitment and their subsequent retention post Brexit, funding and research, and the overall impact on the reputation of higher education in the UK generally.

An examination of the most recent UK higher education staff data (2016-2017), shows that there are 419,710 staff working in higher education, of whom 212,840 are non-academic staff and 206,870 held academic positions. Slightly more recent figures indicate that staff from the European Union accounted for 35,920 academic staff (17% of all academic staff) and 13,610 non-academic staff (HESA, 2018a). During the campaigns for the referendum universities were keen to reassure their EU staff. However, all institutions would need to comply with government policy. The UK Government has now provided some clarity as part of the Brexit negotiations. EU citizens living in the UK are able to apply for UK immigration status (this opened at the end of 2018 as part of the UK Settlement scheme and closes on 1st January 2021, (Department for Exiting the European Union, 2018), provided they have lived in the UK for 5 years. However, this announcement in April 2018 was too late for the 2,350 academics across UK universities who had already resigned amidst the uncertainty of Brexit (Moran, 2018).

As for students, applications from within the European Union to study in the UK has actually seen a 3.4% increase by EU applicants, amounting to an additional 43,150 applications. International applications have risen further, representing an increase of 11%, and resulting in a further 58,450 applications (Busby, 2018a). This has been attributed to the financial effects of a weak Sterling, following on from the Brexit

vote. The UK government has now confirmed that students from the EU will pay the same tuition fees as home students for the duration of their undergraduate course, as long as they commence during the 2018-19 academic year. This extends to the provision of loans for fees and maintenances loans (Department of Education, 2018a), and students will be able to participate in Erasmus schemes until 2020-21 (Universities UK, 2018b). For courses commencing during the 2019-20 academic year, the UK would have left the European Union, so they are subject to change and it is not currently confirmed what these will be. Universities UK (2018d: online) 'is calling on the government to ensure that future academic and student mobility is not impeded by unnecessary bureaucracy regardless of the immigration status of EU/EEA nationals after the UK has left the EU'. Certainly, an impact on EU student applications would be expected for 2019-20 entry. Given the subsequent failure to reach a deal with the EU at the time of writing this, the government has now fixed tuition fees for EU students, so they will be paying the same as home students for 20/21 (Coughlan, 2019a).

1.3.3 Office for Students

In April 2018 the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) was replaced by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), which then became the new Office for Students (OfS). HEFCE, had been formed under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, with a role as lead regulator for HEI in England with responsibility for the provision of funding (HEFCE, no date). OFFA's remit centred on fair access to higher education (OFFA, no date). The creation of OfS was described as 'the biggest change in a

generation’, by its new chief executive Nicola Dandridge (Dandridge, 2017). The original governmental Green and White Papers for HERA, then under the remit of the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, introduced the original vision for the OfS. In his forwarding comments, the then HE minister Jo Johnson, described the role of the OfS to ‘put competition and choice at the heart of the sector regulation’ (Department for Business Innovation and Skill, 2016: 6). The White Paper further highlighted the role of the OfS, effectively as a new market regulator and crucially to be the regulatory body for the TEF (ibid: 66).

This represents a significant shift for the role previously occupied by HEFCE, since it has ‘visibly put students at the heart of the market and ensures that it functions for the students’ (Boyd, 2018: online). The OfS has a chief executive, and there is a shift in its remit and role which were visible in its title and description. This is described by Hale (2018: online) as ‘government-encouraged marketization’, solidifying the notion of students as consumers. This aligned with messages from the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), who stated that ‘students have consumer rights’ (CMA, 2015: 2). The OfS themselves identified four main areas of work, presented in table 4.

Table 4: Office for Students main priorities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping students to get into and succeed in higher education • Helping students stay informed • Making sure that students receive a high-quality education that prepares them for the future • Protects students’ interest

(Source: The Office for Students, 2018b)

There remains confusion and concern over the OfS remit. The OfS replicated the form of regulatory agencies that are common in a privatised market, for instance similar

to Ofgem and Ofcom. HEFCE acted as an intermediary between governments and universities with no regulatory powers, yet the OfS has regulatory powers (Gill, 2018). Two areas that the OfS has articulated are the right for free speech (to defend free speech on campus) and secondly the much-contested issue of value for money in relation to degrees. Free speech is part of the HERA (2017), which grants both institutional and academic staff autonomy 'the institutional autonomy of English higher education providers means the freedom of English higher education providers within the law to conduct their day to day management in an effective and competent way'. In addition, there is provision for academic staff that specifies 'the freedom within the law of academic staff at English HE providers. This includes questioning and debates around controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at the providers' (Department for Education, 2017a – chapter 29: 2). The previous HE minister, Jo Johnson, stated that he wanted the new 'OfS to champion free speech in UK universities' (Department of Education, 2017). Part of the background to this statement included a high-profile example of 'no platforming' at UK universities. Based upon NUS guidelines, no platforming is defined by WonkHE (2018: online) based upon NUS guidelines as the situation where 'someone who has been denied the right to speak at an event run by a university or student society as a result of an active decision made to exclude them by a university or students' union'. This includes those (individuals or organisations) categorised to be racist or fascist. Sir Michael Barber, the Chair for the OfS, stated that 'the Office for Students stands for the widest possible definition of free speech; we will never seek to limit freedom of

speech within the law, and we will always use our powers to promote rather than restrict it' (Office for Students, 2018c: online).

1.3.4 Mental Health

The mental health of both students and academics has been prominent in national news headlines for some considerable time, with universities minister Sam Gyimah informing universities that student mental health was a priority and 'non-negotiable' (Busby, 2018b). The awareness of student mental health issues has increased significantly, and this has been widely reported in the media last year. Marsh (2017: online) reported that 'suicide is at record levels among students at UK universities'. Disclosure of a mental health illness has risen fivefold within HE over a 10-year period and there has been a rise in the suicide rate of 56% over the same period, with more male students committing suicide than female students (Bothwell, 2018a). The centre for suicide research at the HKU, contextualised these findings by stating that 'as far as suicide is concerned, there is a real problem in higher education' (Bothwell, 2018b: online), when compared to the general population the suicide rate is higher by age group (Coughlan, 2018c). Disclosure rates have also increased with 49,265 undergraduate students disclosing a mental health illness during the 2017-18 academic year. Just over 8,000 postgraduate students disclosed a mental health condition in the same period (Universities UK, 2018c). However, research has shown that stigma and in particular 'fear of discrimination during their studies' (Martin, 2009: 259) prevents students from disclosing and hence seeking treatment for their health. Quinn *et al* (2009: 405) have also highlighted the 'general reluctance amongst

students largely due to the stigma that exists'. Students have been shown to benefit from in-house institutions' support services when used alongside NHS services. For example, effective help for students requires institutions to take a 'whole campus approach to meeting the needs of students with mental health' (Murphy, 2016: 110). Whilst this would be a common-sense approach to supporting students, this is under threat from decreases in institutional incomes (Moran and Powell, 2018: 27). Funding cuts to mental health services are £105 million more during 2016-17, hence five years earlier in real terms (Bulman, 2018: online). This becomes particularly difficult when the onus of duty of care falls upon universities to manage (Universities UK, 2018c).

There has also been a sharp increase in reported mental health issues within the academic staff body. In 2014, the Guardian Higher Education reported that mental health was an issue for academics, half of whom are displaying signs of anxiety and depression because of poor work / life balance (Shaw and Ward, 2014). This was attributed to 'demand for results and increasingly marketized higher education system' (ibid). Others share this view on the root cause of academics' mental health. Else (2017) identified causes such as academics work pressures, including a lack of job security and pressure to achieve performance related metrics. The proportion of UK academics 'suffering stress-linked mental health problems', is considerably high when compared to 42% of police officers and 72% of prison officers (Grove 2018: online).

Long hours and workload issues are cited as the main causes of mental health issues, with young and female researchers at highest risk (Inge, 2018). There have been significant consequences linked to these academic pressures. Professor Stefan

Grimm from Imperial College London committed suicide in September 2014. The university's management had told him that he was 'struggling to fulfill metrics', of a professorial post at the institution (Parr, 2014: online). More recently, Dr Malcolm Anderson committed suicide at his workplace, the University of Cardiff. He was described as an outstanding lecturer, who would 'reply to his 418 students at any hour of the day or night' (BBC, 2018: online). However, Anderson was 'struggling silently' with work responsibilities despite complaining to management about being asked to mark 418 exam papers in a 20-day period (Pell, 2018). Whilst these cases are sufficiently high profile to have caught the media's attention, it is unlikely that they are in isolation.

To address student mental health, organisations such as Students Minds (no date), WonkHE (2018) and HEPI (2018) have all prioritised the role of academics in supporting the students, given that academics are part of the frontline and often the first point of contact for help and support. However, with a high number of academics reporting mental health problems, the structures available to provide support for them remains a concern. HEPI (2018) reported an escalation of referrals for mental health support for academic staff. Some institutions have seen referrals typically increasing by 300 – 400% over a 3-year period from 2015/16. Reasons for such referrals include 'excessive workloads' and 'driven by the need to comply with external nationwide audits' – the reports cited drivers that included performance management issues, REF and now TEF (Morrish, 2019: 9-10).

Chapter 2 Literature review

This chapter reviews key literature that underpins this research, commencing with an overview of government reviews and various HE legislation. It provides an historical context of the changing landscape of HE in England to provide context to the origins of the current HE landscape. This is followed by an exploration of neoliberal ideology within education, as well as examining Foucault's notions of governmentality, power and knowledge. Finally, the chapter examines the practices and impacts of the marketization of HE within the UK, introducing the main metrics associated within HE.

2.1 The historical development of HE in England

Over the years governmental reviews have made recommendations which have subsequently been implemented as legislative changes. Kernohan (2018: online) notes how 'major reviews of higher education do tend to correlate with changes of government'. This section will cover the main recommendations made from reviews conducted between 1963 to 2019. This includes reviews by Robbins (1963), Dearing (1997), Browne (2010) and Augar (2019). The key features of each of the reviews have been summarised in table 5.

Table 5: Overview of key governmental HE reviews since Robbins (1963)

Author	Robbins review	Dearing review	Browne review	Augar review
Year	1963	1997	2010	2019
Government under which review was delivered	Conservative	Labour	Conservative & Lib Dem coalition	Conservative
Number of recommendations	173	93	N/A	40
HE Participation rate	5.2%	32%	45%	49%
Main recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Expansion of HE *Widening participation *Creation of 6 new universities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Introduction of tuition fees to £1,000, upfront *Institutional governance *Address binary divide *Staff professionalism *Increase in sub degree courses *Widening participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Universities can set their own fees up to £9,000 *Repayments at £21,000 *Widening participation *Student as a consumer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Reduction of fees to £7,500 *Repayment period for fees increased from 30 to 40 years. *Reintroduction of maintenance grants for low income students *Renaming of student loan to 'student contribution system'.

(Sources: Robbins, 1963; Dearing, 1997; Browne, 2010; Augar, 2019).

2.1.1 The Robbins Review (1963)

Lord Lionel Robbins (1898 – 1984) was a prominent and distinguished British monetary economist who led the HE review upon instruction from Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan. Subsequently referred to as the Robbins review (Gibney, 2013), it commenced in 1961 and has been described as a 'watershed in the development of HE in Britain' (Shattock 2014: 110). Prior to the review there was a lack of information and statistics available on HE. This review highlighted HE as an area for research (Williams, 2014). The aim was 'to review the pattern of full-time higher education...and in light of national needs and resources to advise' (Robbins Review, 1963, p.iii). The national needs were based on regenerating the economy of

a post-war Britain (Callender, 2014). Robbins is purported to have been inspired by the high numbers of people benefitting from HE in America (Scott, 2013: online) and he considered that 'attention to higher education [...] was progressive in respect of income and wealth' (Robbins Review, 1963: 206). This can be interpreted as a reference to social mobility as the core ethos of the review.

In the 1960s, only 5% of the population went to university, of which women represented a quarter of all students (Gibney, 2013). Fifty years later this has risen to almost 50% participation within HE, with women representing 55% of the student population (Coughlan, 2013). Robbins was the first to acknowledge that HE should be accessible to all, and pivotal to Robbins' thinking is that which is referred to as the 'Robbins Principle'. This expressed that 'courses of higher education should be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and wish to do so' (Robbins, 1963:8). Robbins made far more recommendations than any subsequent review, 178 in total. The significant recommendations that underpin the ethos of the review are:

- Expansion of universities
- Awarding 'colleges of advanced technology' university status
- Establishment of six new universities
- Regional colleges affiliated to universities

The expansion of universities remains a significant element of the Robbins review, since this 'set higher education in the UK on the road to become a mass system' (Scott, 2014: 147). Trow (1973), who wrote extensively about the changes within UK HE, described this as a shift from 'elite to mass forms of higher education'. In addition, Robbins also drew attention to institutions, which should hold four main

objectives. These included to provide instruction in skills, to produce refined men or women, the advancement of learning and the development of a common culture and standards of citizenship (Robbins Review, 1963: 6). The cost of the expansion of HE is argued within paragraphs 621-630; there would be a threefold public expenditure rise to £742 million by 1980/81. Robbins' rationale was that this would be remunerative in terms of its effect on productivity (Robbins Review, 1963: 273). Nonetheless, the return on investment in relation to public spending versus economic productivity was not clear.

In summary, the Robbins review contributed to an overhaul of the HE system in England, via increased accessibility to university for everyone. This introduction of widening participation principles recognised the social benefits of HE at a time when the UK was focusing on its post-war development (Callender, 2014), and provided the first step toward mass participation of HE in the UK.

2.1.2 Dearing Review (1997)

Sir Ronald Dearing (1930-2009) was Chancellor of the University of Nottingham when he was asked to conduct a review into HE by a Conservative government. It was eventually delivered to Prime Minister Tony Blair, who had swept into power with a Labour landslide in May 1997. The last major HE review that had been carried out prior to this was the Robbins review in 1963 (Bill, 1998). Robbins had focused on the expansion of HE while Dearing sought to 'find policy solutions to the Robbins' legacy of university expansion' (Birch, 2017: online). Formerly referred to as the National Committee of Enquiry into HE, the review is now commonly known as the Dearing

Review. The aim was to focus on the 'recommendations on how the purposes, shape, structure, size and funding of higher education, including support for students, should develop to meet the needs of the United Kingdom over the next 20 years' (Dearing review, 1997: 3). HE in England had high student numbers, yet there remained 'a core funding problem' (Radcliffe, 2017: online). This is evident in the increased participation rates of students engaging with HE; from a participation rate of just 5.4% in 1960 to a jump of 32% in 1995, resulting in just over a million students in HE (Bill, 1998).

At the time of the Dearing review, former polytechnics had already been universities for at least five years which had resulted in a 'new unitary higher education system' (Birch, 2017: online). The ending of the binary policy created its own issues within institutions, such as differences in governance, alongside the 'shift to mass education' (Lunt, 2008: 742). Dearing (1997: 1) addressed this in his opening statement with a view to focussing on 'staffing and staff development, particularly in relation to teaching'. In addition, he wanted to manage the binary divide that existed by looking at how 'institutions are organised, managed, governed' (ibid). This alone formalised the practice of new public management (NPM) within institutions in England (Deem, 1998).

In total, Dearing made 93 recommendations which are grouped along three main themes: funding, expansion and maintenance of academic standards. Of these the most notable declaration is that since graduates' benefit from a university education, that they should therefore contribute towards the cost of this education. Dearing (1997: 290) described this as a 'strong basis for seeking an increased contribution

from graduates in work towards the cost of their higher education’. The Teaching and Higher Education Act of 1998, once passed by parliament, meant that students from 1998/99 paid means tested tuition fees of £1,000. Other recommendations made by Dearing are summarised in table 6.

Table 6: Main recommendations from the Dearing Review (1997)

- Increase provisions to offer more sub – level degree courses (e.g. CertHE, DipHE, foundation years)
- Continuing expansion of universities, via expanding degree courses
- Widening participation
- ‘Dearing compact’ – a creation of a lifelong culture of learning
- Professionalism of teaching staff with cross institutions teaching qualifications
- Addressing how degree courses can improve students’ employability
- Addressing the binary divide by creating a unitary system to manage governance and planning
- Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) – the precursor of the current Research Excellence Framework (REF)

(Source: Dearing, 1997; pages: 142; 189; 215; 228; 347).

In summary, Dearing ‘shaped the foundations for mass education in the UK’ (Birch, 2017: online) which presently still exist. However, recently the Office for National Statistics announced ahead of the Augar Review, that the deficit left by student loans amounts to £12 billion. This is likely to be added to the national debt, raising it further (Coughlan, 2018d). HEPI (2018: online) commented that the adding of student loans to the national debt is ‘embarrassing’ for policy makers, and as a result, students will be ‘perceived to be costly to the taxpayer’. HEPI continues by stating that this goes against Dearing’s recommendation to ‘treat loans the same as grants’, which is misleading. This will no doubt impact upon the recommendations made by the Augar review.

2.1.3 The Browne Review (2010)

Lord Edmund Browne (1948-present) a former Chief Executive of British Petroleum, led the next major review into HE. This was commissioned by the then incumbent Labour government, although the final report was delivered to a Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition. By 2010, the participation rate of HE had increased now to 45% (Browne, 2010: 2), a 40% increase from when the Robbins's review took place in 1963. Browne wanted to focus on ensuring that HEI are 'sustainably financed', provide 'quality of teaching', and remain 'accessible' (ibid). This was no different from Dearing's focus back in 1997. Browne (2010: 24) expressed in principal one of six that 'there should be more investment in higher education – but institutions will have to convince students of the benefit of investing more'. By this stage the Teaching and Higher Education Act (1998) had introduced tuition fees of £1,000, whilst the Higher Education Act (2004), saw these fees increase to £3,290 for the 2006/07 academic year. However, HE was still not 'sustainably financed'. Browne's review (2010: 4) was based on six key principles:

1. More investment in HE (students pay more)
2. Increase student choice
3. Everyone who has the potential should benefit from HE
4. No one should pay until after they start work
5. Repayments should be affordable
6. Part-time students are treated the same as full-time students

The landmark moment of the review was that 'graduates in employment should make a greater contribution to the costs of higher education in the future' (Browne, 2010: 289). This was based on the premise that graduates benefit from their HE experiences. If students are taking on a greater contribution for their education, institutions should convince students of the benefit of HE, so that students can make

a choice. Under the context of Browne, 'the student is expected to act in the role of buyer/consumer, choosing their programme of study and institution after making an 'informed' decision based on several government-created performance indicators' (Jameson *et al*, 2012: 4). This formalised the role of the student as a consumer and the role of HE as a commodity to be purchased and has contributed to the commodification of HE (ibid). Consequently, universities are free to charge and set their own fees; universities must demonstrate how they have implemented widening participation initiatives if they wish to charge over £6,000. Fees are eventually set at £9,000, with students only repaying the fee once they are in employment and earning over £21,000. All unpaid student debt is written off after 30 years (BBC, 2010) and current student debt is estimated at £12 billion (Coughlan, 2018d) with the first debts under Browne set to be written off by 2040.

2.1.4 The Augar Review (2019)

Philip Augar is the Chair of the post 18 education and funding review, known as the Augar Review. His own website features information on his work and career and promotes the extensive list of books he has written focusing on banking finances (Augar, no date). According to his biography on the UK Government (2018a) press release, his 20-year career within the city as an equities broker, justifies his role as a Chair who understands finance capable of leading a finance-based review.

'Higher education in England has changed between 2010 and 2015 to a greater extent than in any other comparable time period' (Temple 2016, cited in Hillman,

2016: 331). Taking this into consideration and the pressure applied by the leader of the opposition over tuition fees, the review in post-18 education funding was commissioned to promote ‘driving up quality, increasing choice and ensuring value for money are at the heart of a major review of post-18 education’ (UK Government, 2018a: online). Unlike other HE reviews, this review is focusing on post-18 education funding, as opposed to a ‘general HE review’ (Curnock-Cook, 2018: online).

The Augar review was finally released towards the end of May 2019, following delays as a result of the priority of Brexit. The review was based on eight principles, which can be seen in table 7, with the aim of ‘delivering value for students and taxpayers’ (Augar, 2019: 5). This runs throughout the eight principles, the undercurrent of which centres on the accountability of HE to the taxpayer. According to HEPI (2019), Augar’s main priorities are to ensure that HEI deliver courses that are necessary for economic stability, but low income, such as nursing and teaching, to focus on the cost of strategically important STEM subjects, to focus on subjects that add social plus economic value and finally, to support HEIs that may be impacted by a deficit in fees.

Table 7: Principles of the Augar Review

Principle 1	Post-18 education benefits society, the economy, and individuals
Principle 2	Everyone should have the opportunity to be educated after the age of 18
Principle 3	The decline in numbers of those getting post-18 education needs to be reversed
Principle 4	The cost of post-18 education should be shared between taxpayers, employers and learners
Principle 5	Organisations providing education and training must be accountable for the public subsidy they receive
Principle 6	Government has a responsibility to ensure that its investment in tertiary education is appropriately spent and directed
Principle 7	Post-18 education cannot be left entirely to market forces
Principle 8	Post-18 education needs to be forward-looking

(Source: Augar, 2019: 8).

A total of 40 recommendations were made by Augar, including the much-anticipated reduction in tuition fees. The key recommendations effective from the 2021/22 academic year include:

- Recommendation 3.2: fees reduced to £7,500 from 2021/22
- Recommendation 3.3: government to replace the lost fee income by increasing the teaching grant
- Recommendation 3.5: governments to adjust teaching grants to reflect subject costs and its social and economic value to students and taxpayers
- Recommendation 3.7: government will intervene with courses that have poor retention, poor graduate employability and poor long-term earnings
- Recommendation 3.8: withdrawal of financial support for foundation year attached to degree courses
- Recommendation 6.3: repayment threshold extended from 30 years to 40 years
- Recommendation 6.7: change in terminology to 'student contribution system', moving away from the language of debt and loan
- Recommendation 7.1: introduction of maintenance grants for socio-economically disadvantaged students

The implications of the Augar Review centres on the accountability of courses to students and also to taxpayers. Rich (2019: online) identifies how the word 'value' was used 98 times by Augar in reference to reflecting 'more accurately the subject's reasonable cost and its social and economic value', whereas 'value' was used five times to reflect the value of education not associated with a monetary value. This is explicitly apparent when examining recommendation 3.5, which states that 'governments to adjust teaching grants to reflect subject's costs and its social and economic value to students and taxpayers' (Augar, 2019: 96). In other words, the government will only fill the financial deficit as a result of a reduction in fees, for courses that it validates as being economically viable. It would be correct to hypothesize that courses that do not result in a high financial graduate outcome or are not STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) based may be

under threat, simply because they may represent a loss of income for the institution. Conlon and Halterbeck's (2019) post review analysis for Universities UK, highlights that the 'winners' based on Augar's recommendations include high earning graduates (mainly male), STEM based subjects and students from disadvantaged backgrounds. In contrast, 'losers' under the Augar Review include low earning graduates (mainly female) and particular AHSS (arts, humanities and social sciences) led HEIs, who will see a 'significant decline in tuition fees income' and may be pushed into a 'deficit' (Conlon and Halterbeck, 2019: 5). However, Augar suggested 'separate arrangements to support those specialist institutions offering the higher quality provision that might otherwise be adversely affected by these recommendations' (HEPI, 2019: online).

Ahead of the Augar Review the Department for Education (2019) had highlighted calls to end what it described as 'low value degrees', referring to degrees where students are not earning enough five years post-graduation to repay student loans. With AHSS subjects under potential threat and the extension of the fee repayment, the Augar recommendations, if implemented, will see students fully pay for their degrees. The government would ensure this happens by directing students on what to study, through default making this review a watershed moment within the history of HE in England (Hillman, 2019).

2.2 The historical development of HE in England – Acts of Parliament

The HE reviews correspond in part with major legislative changes that have taken place which have been embedded in law. Major Acts of Parliament include the

Further and Higher Education Act (1992), the Teaching and Higher Education Act (1998), the Higher Education Act (2004), and finally the Higher Education and Research Act (2017) which is the focus of this research. The key features of each of the acts are summarised in table 8.

Table 8: 'At a glance' key features of HE legislation

Act of Parliament²	Further & Higher Education Act	Teaching and Higher Education Act	Higher Education Act	Higher Education & Research Act³
Year	1992	1998	2004	2017
Government	Conservative	Labour	Labour	Conservative Coalition
Passed through Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Removal of binary divide: 35 polytechnics awarded university status – the 'post 92' *Creation of HEFCE replacing Universities Funding Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Introduction of tuition fees - £1,000 which are means tested *Fees repaid once graduate income is £10,000 pa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Tuition fees increased to £3,000 *Fees repaid once graduate income is £21,000 pa * Creation of Office for Fair Access (OFFA). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework at institution level *Creation of Office for Students to replace HEFCE & OFFA *Award new providers – degree awarding powers

² Student numbers uncapped during 15/16 academic year

³ Prime Minister Theresa May capped fee raises and raised the threshold for fees repayment to £25,000 in October 2017, ahead of the Augar Review

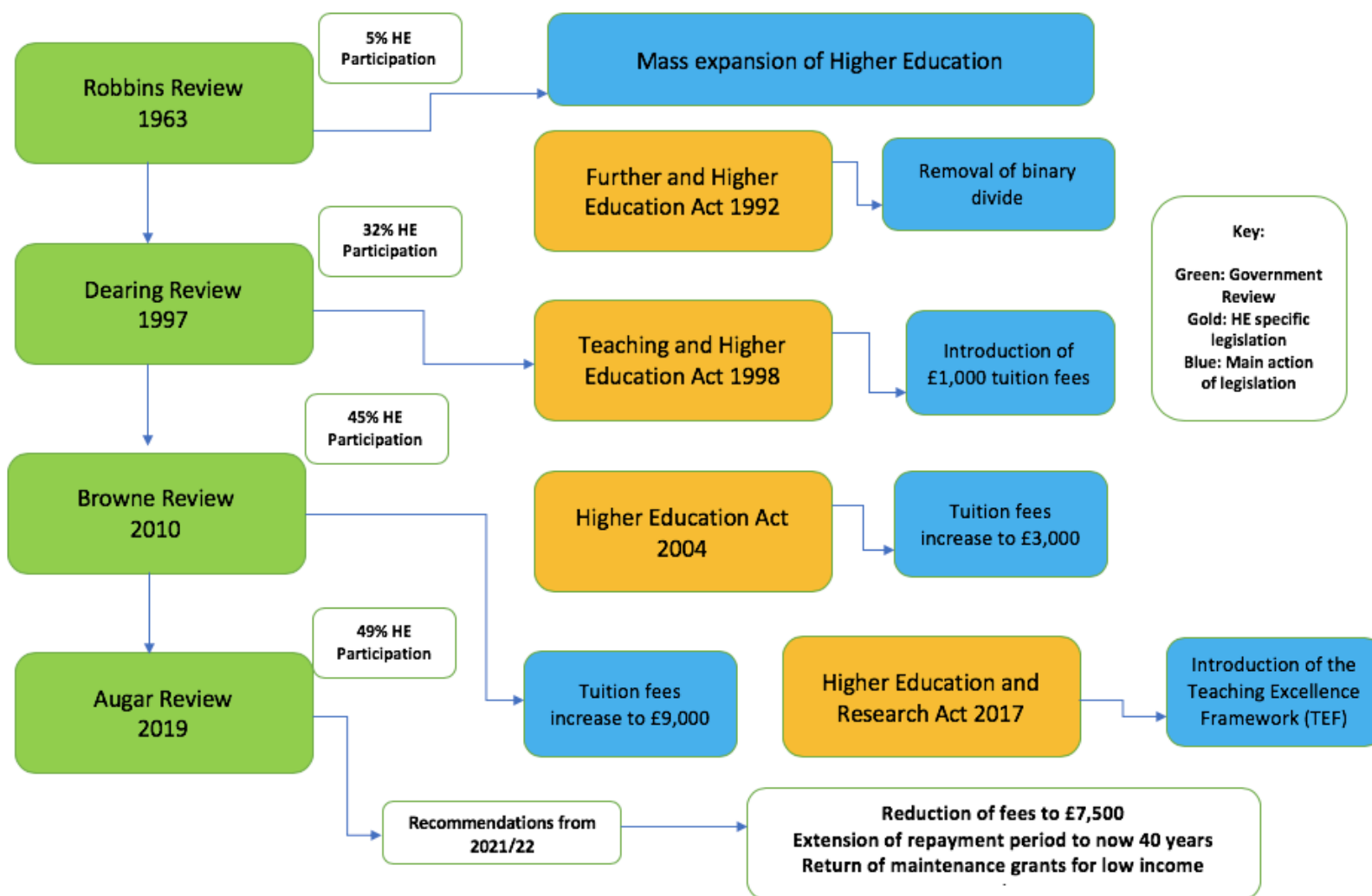


Figure 1: Overview of the development of governmental policy and legislation in the UK

2.2.1 The Higher Education and Research Act (2017)

The Higher Education and Research Act (2017), hereafter referred to as HERA, received Royal Assent on 27th May 2017 having been made an Act of Parliament. The Act originated as part of a manifesto pledge by the Conservative Party during the 2015 election. The pledge prioritised a focus on value for money for university students, as well as stating that ‘we will introduce a framework to recognise universities offering the highest teaching quality’ (Conservative Party Manifesto, 2015: 35). The manifesto pledge highlighted that more information and data would be made available to potential students, so they could make an informed choice about selecting universities (ibid). After winning the 2015 election, a policy entitled ‘Fixing the foundations: creating a more prosperous nation’ outlined further details including the introduction of a new Teaching Excellence Framework, which would ‘sharpen incentives for institutions to provide excellent teaching as currently exists for research’ (Chancellor of the Exchequer, 2015: 28). This policy presented a new model to allow new HE providers to enter the market and be awarded with degree awarding powers which would allow them to compete with established universities. This was justified as ‘widening the range of high-quality higher education providers can stimulate competition and innovation, increase choice for students, and deliver better value for money’ (ibid).

HERA centres around the formation of the Office of Students (OfS), a new regulatory body that will replace both OFFA and HEFCE (see Chapter 1), with the core function of OfS is to focus on choice, quality and value for money (HERA Explanatory notes,

2017: 5). The act outlines a series of outcomes that OfS would seek to achieve, these are included in table 9.

Table 9: The main priorities of the Office for Students

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to participation in HE• Greater transparency to the data held by HE• Risk based regulation via facilitating new providers with degree awarding powers• Protect institutional autonomy• The power to operate a teaching excellence framework – to recognise and reward high quality teaching• Create a single research and innovation funding body (UKRI)• Increase in tuition fees linked to TEF outcomes from 17/18

(Source: HERA Explanatory notes, 2017: 7; Department for Business Innovation and Skill, 2015; 2016).

The reaction of Universities UK (2017: 3) to the passing of the act was positive, given that the Act reflects the changing HE landscape since 1993. Universities UK also noted that HERA ‘should provide a stable framework for the sector into the future’. This body also identified the need for discussion around ‘self-regulation’, and that there would be a need to determine models of ‘public accountability based on a rounded view of student outcomes’ (2017: 15). In contrast, the University College Union (UCU) expresses concern that the act is marketising the sector (UCU, no date) and that HE was ‘on the road to privatisation’ (Hunt, 2017: online). This is mirrored by Choat (2017) who draws attention to the overarching aim of the Act which is to give degree awarding powers to private providers, and hence universities are now operating in a free market. The TEF, as well as other HE metrics, represents part of the ‘neoliberal audit culture’ (ibid: 143).

2.2.2 The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) is described by the Office for Students (OfS) as a 'national exercise', with the main aim to 'assess excellence in teaching at universities and colleges' (Office for Students, 2018d: online). Both the Green Paper (titled '*Higher education: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice*') and the White Paper (titled '*Success as a knowledge economy: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice*') cited that the introduction of the TEF would develop, improve and reward good teaching whilst also raising the value of teaching so that it is prized as much as research (Department for Business Innovation and Skill, 2015; 2016). The TEF was described as a mechanism to safeguard that 'all UK colleges and universities meet the national standard' (Office for Students, 2018d: online). The Green Paper maintained that the TEF should result in a change of institutional culture since, positive TEF outcomes are linked to student recruitment (Department for Business Innovation and Skill, 2015: 19) and justified an increase in tuition fees. The TEF has been phased-in gradually over a series of three cycles. The TEF pilot ran during 2015/16 and was referred to as TEF1, although no awards categories were presented. The first full year of the TEF ran during 2016/17, when institutions formally submitted their applications. This cycle of the TEF is referred to as TEF2 and produced the formal classifications, where institutions were awarded gold, silver or bronze. The most recent TEF cycle, known as TEF3 ran from 2017/18, and this cycle saw a change in methodology with the reduction of NSS weighting; this cycle was optional and not all institutions took part, deciding to hold onto their TEF2 awards (Department for Business Innovation and Skill, 2016: 44). The TEF purports to measure excellence in three areas: teaching quality, the learning

environment (resources and activities offered by institutions) and finally, student outcomes and learning gains (linked to students' educational goals). These are measured via six parameters as outlined in table 10.

Table 10: Core components of the TEF and metric source

Parameters	TEF measure	Data collected via metrics
1	Student satisfaction with teaching on their course	National Student Survey (NSS) ⁴
2	Student satisfaction with academic support	National Student Survey
3	Student satisfaction with assessment feedback	National Student Survey
4	Student retention	Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA)
5	Employment or further study after six months	Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE)
6	Highly skilled employment or further study after six months	Longitudinal Educational outcome (LEO)

(Adapted from Office for Students, 2018e; Department for Business Innovation and Skill, 2016).

This core metrics dataset is further drilled down, with the metric data broken down to its component parts, and the resulting data is known as split metrics. Core metrics are split according to a range of different characteristics for the student population. This includes breaking down the student population by entry qualifications, 'age on entry, ethnicity, sex, disability, and social disadvantage' (Department for Education, 2017b: 43). For example, the student retention data for disabled students is then benchmarked as part of the UK performance indicators for HE (ibid) and compared to other institutions. This provides an indication of how well disabled students have achieved against other student groups. Deviations of benchmarking can either result in positive or negative flags, where positive flags meant that institutions' data is significant ahead of the benchmark standard and vice versa. As a rule, double or single positive flags result in a gold awards, whilst single or negative flags could result

⁴ Lessons learnt report (2017) following TEF indicated that the NSS weighting would be halved for TEF3.

in a bronze award (Rosenberg, 2017). Consequently, the TEF split metrics data allows more clarity for all student groups and their outcomes, with the TEF metrics more concerned with specific details, rather than the overall score.

In addition to the above metrics, participating institutions, of which there are about 300, are required to submit an additional 15-page supplementary statement, for review by the TEF awarding panel. The aim of this statement is for the institution to contextualise their data and their meaning. It is now recognised that the supplementary statement was more influential in determining the TEF outcome than initially credited (Beech, 2018c). Within the supplementary statement, institutions are to clearly indicate how they recruit and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Green Paper indicated targets of participation rates for BAME students of 20% and 27% for disadvantaged students by 2020 (Department for Business Innovation and Skill, 2015: 22). This is outlined clearly in the white paper, which states that as part of the TEF application process institutions must have 'approved access and participation agreement or to publish a short statement setting out their commitment to widening participation and fair access' (Department for Business Innovation and Skill, 2016: 49). Reviewing the data, statement and evidence, institutions are awarded one of the following awards by the TEF panel, as shown in table 11.

The Department for Education has instructed a TEF review, the report for which is due in mid-2019. This is to assess if the TEF is 'fit for purpose' (Bothwell, 2018c). The Department for Education (2018a) has appointed Dame Shirley Pearce from the

London School of Economics to lead the independent review, ensuring that findings are made available in the public interest.

Table 11: TEF teaching awards by category

Award	Teaching indicator	% of institutions with award as of 2018
Gold	Highest quality of teaching found in UK	27%
Silver	Teaching exceeds rigorous national quality required for UK HE	50%
Bronze	Teaching meets the rigorous national quality required for UK HE	23%
Provisional	Does not have enough data to be fully assessed	N/A

(Source: Office for Students, 2018e).

2.2.3 Issues, controversies and reactions

The introduction of the TEF has not been without controversy. The National Union of Students (NUS) led the campaign to ‘wreck the TEF’, stating that ‘TEF is a tool by which to raise tuition fees’ (Pell, 2017: online). The NUS started a campaign to boycott the National Student Survey (NSS), since NSS data contributes to the overall TEF award. The NUS also had the support of the UCU, which encourages teaching staff to support the NSS boycott (NUS, 2016). The impact of the boycott resulted in NSS completion rates decreasing from 72% to 68% (Grove, 2017), with 12 universities all of which were Russell group institutions, omitted from the main results. Whilst the boycott had some impact, for TEF data to be truly interrupted would have required a disruption of NSS data for at least two years. With a change of leadership in the NUS there may not have been an appetite to proceed with the boycott (Buckley–Irvine, 2017).

The main critics of the TEF centre on how the TEF outcome is constructed, since the TEF represents a confirmation of universities maintaining their position within the free markets. Canning (2017: 3) defined the TEF as a 'concept of hyper-reality' explaining that 'REF is traceable to actual research practices through publications', whereas the TEF 'has no traceable teaching element'. The TEF metrics are considered 'ghost measurements' as metrics like the NSS and DLHE are proxy measures of teaching, as opposed to a direct measure of teaching quality. The over simplicity of measuring excellent teaching is based, in part, upon the type of skilled employment a student obtains. Gunn (2018: 129) supports this by adding that the TEF, whilst being a 'multi-purpose evaluation tool', also provides information for the markets for consumer use. This 'neoliberal audit and monitoring culture into HE', Rudd (2017:59) argues, is unlikely to bring about the desired change to make teaching excellent. This is concept discussed further in this chapter.

2.2.4 Student perceptions of the TEF

The Universities minister Jo Johnson (in his first term in office between 2015 – 2018), stated in his forward speech within the white paper, that 'we need action to address the lack of clear information available to university applicants and the variation in quality and outcomes experienced by some students' (Department for Business Innovation and Skill 2016: 5). It is therefore interesting to observe how students are using the available TEF data. The UCAS website includes a section on the TEF for all applicants, essentially covering what it is, what it means, how to interpret the awards. The information is deemed accessible and clear to read and mirrors the official description by the OfS (UCAS, no date). However, only 17% of UCAS applicants

knew what the TEF was, out of 85,000 applicants that were questioned, representing less than 1 in 5 potential students (Havergal, 2018). This is despite the information being accessible via UCAS.

Students may already have enough information or find other information they feel is more relevant as part of their decision-making process. The annual HEPI review of student experience found that students at gold-rated institutions perceived their institution to be good value but not necessarily providing good teaching (McKie, 2018a), which is at odds with what the TEF award represents. Neves and Hillman (2018) found that 40% of students at gold institutions rated their institution as good or very good, compared to 33% at silver institutions and 34% at bronze institutions. Research was also commissioned by the Consortium of Student Unions to 8,994 full-time undergraduate and postgraduates, regarding their perception of the TEF. The findings show that in general 84% of students supported a government exercise that encourages excellence in teaching. However, this dropped to just 47% when students looked at the approach used to measure 'excellence'. This is because 'other factors will inevitably influence the ratings, such as student satisfaction in light of social opportunities which have nothing to do with teaching' (UK Trendence Research, 2017: 5). Just 22% of students approved of the proposed link with the TEF award and an increase in tuition fees, while the use of the TEF ratings: gold, silver and bronze proved divisive. This was highlighted in the study by a student explaining that, 'as someone who doesn't come from a well-off family, it would encourage me to pick a lower rated university'. Another student stated 'it is another way to divide students on social standing rather than ability. Wealthier students can afford a higher

standard of education’ (ibid: 7). Student perceptions and views of the TEF contrast with one of the main purposes of HERA and the TEF – that of social mobility - which is at the heart of the review.

International students, however, display more interest in the outcome of the TEF (Stevens, 2017). Results from the International Student Barometer (ISB) survey show that ‘students are more likely to choose a university with a gold TEF award, above one that is highly ranked in the global league tables’ (Custer, 2017: online). Potential international students rank ‘university recognition of teaching in a country wide scheme’ as the third most important factor when selecting an institution, with 61% of students in agreement (Study International, 2018: online). Hayes (2017a: 489) argues that the TEF is non-inclusive for international students since the Home Office may limit visas for international students who may attend a ‘low quality’, i.e. bronze institution. Furthermore, since the metrics of TEF include the NSS, Hayes argues that the NSS reflects the British system of education which does not capture the understanding of what is ‘best’ across different countries. As a result, international students’ views are not considered; they have been ‘TEF-ed out’ (Hayes, 2017b).

2.2.5 The Subject Level Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

The Department for Education (2017: 7) justifies the purpose of the subject level TEF by acknowledging that ‘outcomes for students is likely to vary not only between providers, but also between a provider’s subjects’. Therefore, the subject level TEF

will reflect the 'potential differences in quality of teaching' across a range of programmes within institutions. During 2017-18 the subject level TEF pilot was conducted, focussing on the examination of two proposed models, known as model A '*by exception*' and model B '*bottom up*'. The '*by exception*' model works on the basis that if subjects are not formally assessed, then they are awarded the same category as the institution. Those subjects that are assessed may have a different TEF award to the institution. The second model, B '*bottom up*', works on the premise that all subjects take part and are subsequently categorised. These subject outcomes then contribute to the institutional TEF award. The pilot carried out during 2018-19 is based on responses to the consultation and findings from the original pilot (Office for Students, no date, a).

2.3 Neoliberalism

In the process of reviewing the literature so far, reference has been made to neoliberal culture and audit within HE. Therefore, at this stage of the literature review it seems appropriate to discuss the wider context of neoliberalism and explore what this means, its origins, manifestations, and how neoliberal ideology is evident within the structuring of educational policy in schools and beyond. 'We live in the age of neoliberalism' is an impactful statement that was made by Saad-Filho and Johnston (2005: 1) and reflects the widespread global implementation of neoliberal ideology. Thorsen (2010: 188) states that neoliberalism has been a frequently used term since the 1980s to describe the nature of society in its present state; the 'lamentable spread of capitalism and consumerism'. The use of the word

‘lamentable’ here reflects research which shows that neoliberalism is perceived and presented to be a ‘negative term’ (Boas and Gans-Morse, 2009: 132). This is further compounded because the term neoliberalism itself is ‘overused and underdefined’ and often used as an academic catchphrase (ibid). Flew (2014) refers to neoliberalism as a form of governmentality, a concept explored further in this chapter.

Martinez and Garcia (1997: 1) describe neoliberalism as a ‘set of economic policies that have become widespread’ particularly during the last 25 years. Dumenil and Levy (2011: 1) offer a more detailed definition defining neoliberalism as ‘a new stage of capitalism that emerged in the wake of the structural crisis in the 1970s’. The commonality between the definitions all highlight neoliberalism as a modern occurrence towards the end of the last century.

2.3.1 Origins and ideology

Dumenil and Levy (2011: 5) wrote that ‘neoliberalism should be understood as a new phrase in the evolution of capitalism’. This evolution of capitalism can be dated back to 1776, when Adam Smith first published ‘The Wealth of Nations’, stating that ‘markets are governed by an invisible hand and thus should be subject to minimal government interference’ (Smith, 1954). Neoliberalism is derived from liberalism which is a political ideology that places emphases on the importance of the freedom of individuals. It also acknowledges that whilst governments protect individuals, they can equally be a menace to the individual (Smith, no date). Neoliberalism represents a change in the position of the State from being a provider, to a ‘promoter of markets

and competition' (Birch, 2017: online) and therefore neoliberalism itself 'must be a revival of liberalism' (Thorsen, 2010: 189).

Neoliberalism gained support in the 1970s and 1980s, in part driven by the winter of discontent in the UK and economic turmoil within the former Eastern Bloc nations (Flew, 2014). Weak economic performance by the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc nations was demonstrating that 'state control was not working' and was now considered by many to be destructive to the global economy (ibid). In 1978 and 1979 the UK was experiencing a significant reduction in economic growth, referred to as the 'winter of discontent'. The incumbent Labour government was struggling to 'curtail wage increases', which resulted in battles with trade unions (Martin, 2009: 49). This manifested itself in the form of national strikes, regular power cuts and rationings. The Labour government was replaced by the Conservatives who implemented neoliberal policies in the form of mass deregulation and privatisation of national services. The US economy was also in turmoil and facing the worst recession since the Great Depression (Amadeo, 2019). In his inaugural address, the newly appointed Ronald Reagan said, 'in this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem' (Reagan, 1981: online). The subsequent 'Ronald Revolution' saw a reduction in government spending, taxes and deregulation.

2.3.2 Manifestations of neoliberalism within UK society

Giroux (2010: 1) described the principles of neoliberalism as ‘free market fundamentalism’ and thus the span of neoliberalism is therefore ‘maximised by unregulated market behaviours’ (Saunders, 2007: 2). The role of the government is to arbitrate the sale ensuring that no monopolies exist. Table 12 outlines the main principles of how neoliberalism is reflected in government led initiatives, many of which were implemented by Margaret Thatcher after the Conservative Party landslide victory in 1979. In 1980, tenants in social housing could buy their property at a reduced rate, in what is known as the ‘right to buy’ initiative, as outlined in the Housing Act (1980). Over a ten-year period, Thatcher had privatised major state-owned utilities including British Telecom in 1984, British Aerospace and British Gas in 1986, Rolls-Royce and British Airways in 1987, and British Steel in 1988 (Centre for Public Impact, 2016). At Thatcher’s departure in 1990 over ‘40,000 UK state-owned businesses employing 600,000 workers had been privatised’ (ibid). John Major carried on Thatcher’s work with the privatisation of British Rail commencing in 1994 and completed by 1997, and the Royal Mail was eventually sold in 2013.

Table 12: Main characteristics of neoliberalism within markets

Source	Main scope of neoliberalism
Martinez and Garcia (1997:1)	Liberating free markets with no state intervention, cutting public expenditure, deregulation, privatisation via selling of state-owned enterprises, eliminating community and replace with individual responsibility.
Harvey (2007:2)	Free trade and free markets, strong right for private property, state much create, preserve an institutional framework to support these principles, minimum intervention from the state, deregulation, privatisation.
Furlong (2013: 30)	Deregulation, privatisation, state reduced to managing the awarding of relevant contracts, state ensures there is no monopoly.

From 1987, Tony Blair's Labour government continued with privatisation but in a different form, the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), using private money to fund public infrastructure such as hospitals and schools (Seymour, 2012). Whilst the PFI was introduced under a Conservative government it was expanded by the then Labour Chancellor Gordon Brown, with initiatives such as the '*Building Schools for the Future*' scheme. The recent collapse of building contractor Carillion with liabilities of over £6.9 billion meant that many public projects, such as NHS hospitals, have never been completed and were left unfinished and 'in limbo' (Simpson, 2018). There are many reported incidents of PFI failures, including schools built under the PFI sitting empty whilst costing money, and other schools tied into PFI contracts which are financially not viable (TES, 2018; Yorke, 2017). This led to Chancellor Philip Hammond ending any further PFI contracts, stating that '90% of them were signed by the Blair-Brown government, and ending them would be putting another legacy of Labour behind us' (Hammond, 2018: online). Following the privatisation of state commodities further neoliberal practices were implemented within the education sector, which will be explored in the next section.

2.3.3 Neoliberal structuring of educational policy

Thatcher introduced the Education Reform Act (ERA) in 1988, which represented the most significant change to education since the 1944 Education Act (referred to as the 'Butler Act'). Despite changes in successive governments over the last 30 years, the ERA has remained unchanged. The act is said to have been responsible for the marketisation of the school system and has created a system that 'emphasizes

parental choice and competition between schools' (Whitty and Power, 2000: 93) under the principles of the free markets. The ERA (1988) has made several significant changes to education for 4-16 years including:

- Parentocracy – giving parents choice about which schools to select
- Creation of school league tables with a focus on exams results and failing schools
- Introduction of the national curriculum – SATs, KS1-4 and GCSEs, thereby standardising teaching and its measurement
- Creation of OFSTED – a body to measure standards, raise standards and thus the accountability of schools

Exam results published in school league tables enables like for like comparisons between schools – facilitated by the introduction of the National Curriculum. Consequently, this creates a competitive environment between schools which allows 'parents to vote with their feet' within the 'schools market', via 'go compare' type websites (Millar, 2018: online). Schools that are failing may eventually turn into 'sink' schools, because of this marketisation. The ERA (1988) 'changed the managerial relationship between schools and education authorities' (Wrigley, 2014: 23).

'Education, education, education' were the immortal words uttered by then opposition leader Tony Blair at the Labour Party manifesto launch (Blair, 1996). Blair was highlighting the need to focus on education as the main priority for a (New) Labour government. Under Blair's leadership, a neoliberal based management of schools was introduced. This was achieved by removing the governmental and local authority responsibility for managing schools via the creation of city academies, later renamed academies. The academies programme permitted schools to be privately sponsored and managed but remain publicly funded (Pike, 2010). These schools 'operate outside of local authority control' and thus have 'more autonomy and additional freedom' (Eyles *et al*, 2016: 470). This

was made possible by the Education Act (2002) which prescribed an academy model with an initial target of 200 academies by 2010 which was met a year earlier. The subsequent Academies Act (2010) saw a major expansion of schools converting to academy status with several schools termed multi-academy. By January 2018 there were 6,996 academies, which represented 35% of all schools⁵ with 47% of pupils being taught in an academy (National Audit Office, 2018).

Setting up an academy initially required sponsors to contribute financially, but this was abolished in 2010 (Eyles *et al*, 2016). Academies have proven to be a controversial educational policy. Harris (2012: 512) discusses this in terms of an 'increased risk of social division, instability of local schooling arrangements', as well as a lessening of 'local democratic accountability for state funded education'. Much is reported in the press concerning academies' sponsors, including financial irregularities, significant salary hikes for Chief Executives, asset stripping schools, poor governance as well as a decrease in teaching standards (Whittaker, 2018; Perraudin, 2017; Sodha, 2018). Furthermore, there has been a focus on teachers and teachers' working conditions. Hill (2007) states that information around workers' environments and conditions within a neoliberal setting are often difficult to determine. Organisations can refuse to publish or provide data, therefore a 'decentralised system is more difficult for trade unions to gather information' (Lewis 2004, cited in Hill, 2007: 211). Since academies are not under local authority control, they are free to set their own terms and conditions for staff, meaning 'teachers are

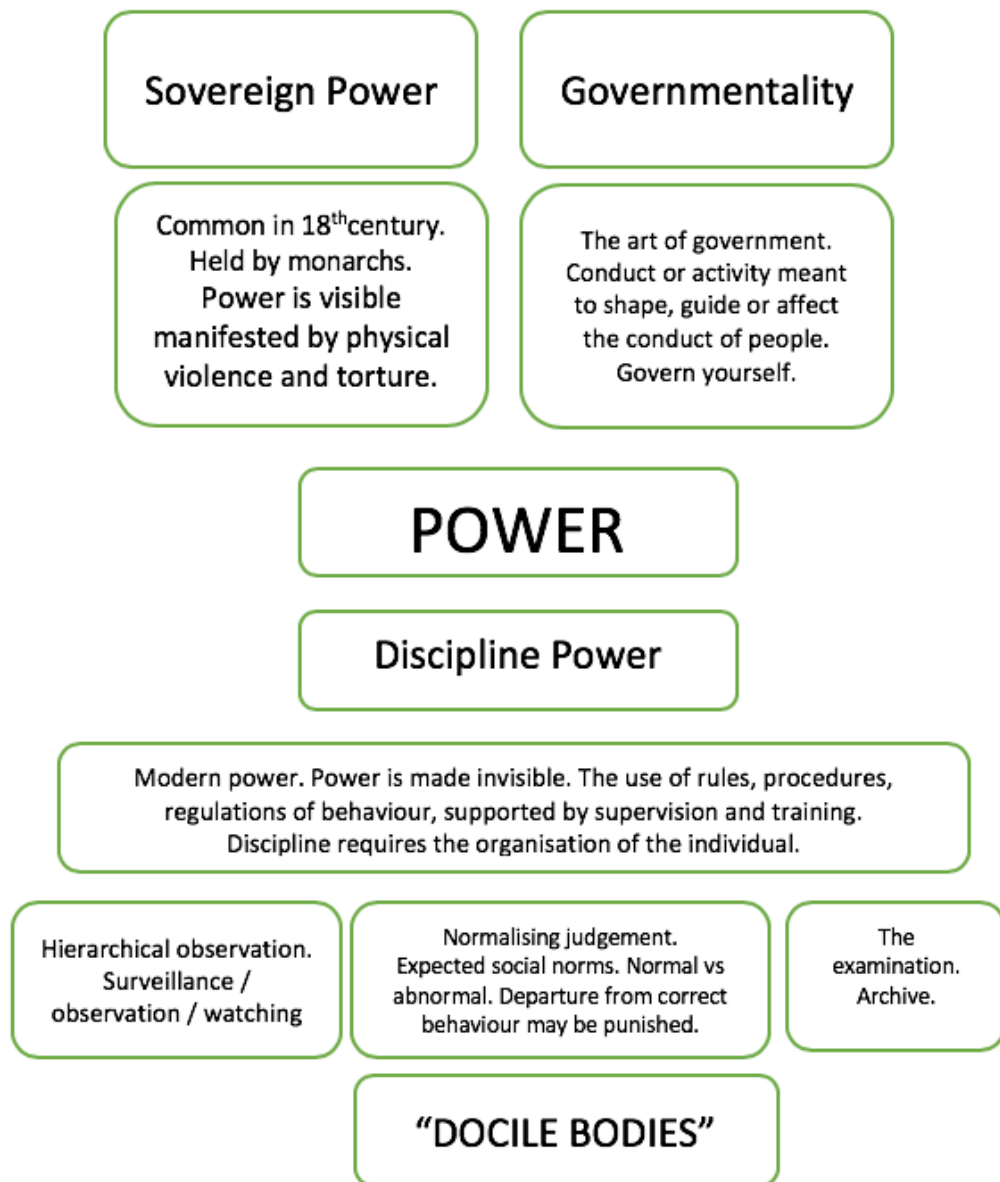
⁵ This figure includes all free schools

now being controlled'. This implies teachers in academies can be employed in contracts that are not necessarily favourable. This has contributed to academies having higher staff turnover and more teachers employed with qualifications. Therefore, academies have found it harder to retain good teachers (Hill *et al*, 2016: 22). The creation of academies has resulted in 63% of head teachers leaving their post in the first year (Eyles, *et al* 2016). The Conservative government wanted all schools to have academy status by 2022, although this was subsequently dropped (Adams, 2016). It has been relevant to consider and analyse the impact of marketisation upon schools so that parallels can be drawn for the marketisation of HE within England, which will be explored further.

2.4 Foucault: the role of power in society

French Philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) wrote extensively on the grouping within society of individuals, such as within schools, prisons, mental hospitals, and governments. He has been described as a social theorist whose work focused on elements of historical periods. Foucault referred to this as episteme – each ‘historical period possesses a set of intellectual rules which are used to establish knowledge’ (Oliver, 2010: 32). Foucault wrote about the relationship between power and knowledge, and how the ‘former is used to control and define the latter’. What authorities claim as ‘scientific knowledge’ has been considered to be simply a means of social control (Stokes, 2004: 187). The term ‘authorities’ can also be used to refer to the government and this can extend further into other groupings, such as schools, prisons, hospitals and universities. The next section will explore some of Foucault’s key concepts of power, which will be used to establish the theoretical framework to underpin this study, figure 2 provides an overview of these concepts.

Figure 2: Main forms of power



(adapted from: Foucault 1977; 1991a).

2.4.1 Power

Foucault wrote, debated and analysed the concept and impact of power, as well as the role it plays in controlling society. Power is presented as an act, having the ability to influence an individual's actions or behaviour. In everyday society Foucault saw power as being disseminated by 'the many institutions and organisations of the state'

(Oliver, 2010: 38), with power playing a role in the establishment of institutions such as schools, prisons, the military and hospitals. As part of their role, such institutions will monitor, control and coerce society in order to fulfil organisational goals. In his book *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison* (Foucault, 1977), Foucault identified three main forms of power: sovereign, disciplinary and governmentality.

2.4.2 Sovereign power

Sovereign power is described as the power held by monarchs as was common in the 18th century, which was intended to send a clear message to the citizens. Foucault (1977) described in detail the punishment inflicted on a man named Damians, who had unsuccessfully attempted to kill the king. The punishment details described Damians' brutal execution, including being covered in boiling oil and then hung, drawn and quartered, in front of a large audience. Sovereign power meant visibly displaying the incredible force of the monarch (Gutting, 2005), however, it often resulted in sympathy with the punished and is therefore counterproductive.

2.4.3 Disciplinary power

A newer, more modern form of power took the opposite approach to sovereign power, referred to as disciplinary power. This was manifested as a 'gentler way of punishment' (Gutting, 2005: 80), with Foucault seeing disciplinary power as a form of 'strict discipline', whereby this type of power was used for 'corrective training' (Rabinow, 1986). When comparing the treatment of prisoners in the modern era there is a stark difference to the punishment distributed under sovereign power.

Prisoners' time is allocated across a range of different activities that they must undertake and complete during their day, with each minute accounted for. Foucault saw this humane approach as discipline; the corrective training that prisoners needed for their rehabilitation.

Disciplinary power is composed of three distinct stages: hierarchical observation, normalising judgement, and the examination (Foucault, 1977). Hierarchical observation is simply the observation of individuals, who may or may not be aware that they are being observed, but the threat of observation is significant enough to have an impact on their behaviour. Foucault demonstrated the influence of hierarchical observation using the example of the panopticon prison. Based upon the work of British philosopher Jeremy Bentham, the basic idea of the panopticon prison created what Oliver (2010: 55) described as a 'psychological atmosphere in which prisoners felt under observation at all times'. In the panopticon this was achieved by the simple design of the prison, which had a central, cylindrical watchtower used by the prison guards. The watchtower had blinds and shutters, whilst shining a light. Prisoners' cells are arranged around the central watchtower; prisoners can see the watchtower, but they cannot see inside the tower. Hence, they have no idea if they are being observed, how many guards are in the tower and even if guards are present at all. Conversely, guards can see into prisoners' cells from the watchtower at all times. This observation or surveillance of prisoners via the watchtower is enough for prisoners to self-regulate their behaviour, despite them not knowing if they are being watched. As Foucault said, the design of the panopticon and threat of surveillance meant that prisoners 'police' themselves since they fear punishment by the guards

(Foucault, 1977; 1991a). The mere presence of the watchtower is a reminder to prisoners that they are being watched. This influences their conduct and results in compliance with the institution, in this case the prison. The watchtower represented a form of power, providing knowledge for the guards who use that knowledge to exert power over the prisoners. In this context, the panopticon can be perceived to be a form of power used to modify prisoners' behaviour. Foucault saw this as the removal of their freedom to make decisions in order that they make a meaningful 'contribution to the economy' (Oliver, 2010: 66).

A more modern-day approach to surveillance within society, facilitated by technology and fulfilling the same purpose as the panopticon prison, is the use of CCTV cameras to act as deterrents. Even non-functioning CCTV cameras are sold as deterrents based on the same principle that people do not know if the camera is real or not and, hence, whether they are being observed. Speed cameras work on a similar basis. Stop and search is another example of a more physical type of surveillance. Around half of all stop and searches end with an arrest, with BAME people three times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people (UK Government, 2019). The stop and search technique are a reminder that the police are observing and the threat of this may be enough to alter behaviour, which Foucault argued was an assault on personal freedom resulting in conformity. Other forms of modern-day surveillance include the use of social media, which may be subject to surveillance by employers; many organisations have policies on what employees may or may not post via social media.

The second component of disciplinary power is referred to by Foucault as 'normalising judgement', which is described as a 'peculiarly pervasive means of control' (Gutting, 2005: 84). Within all aspects of society and even within our families, there are social norms that we are expected to obey, parameters that range from normal to abnormal. For instance, we are told what an acceptable weight range is for height, school pupils are required to have achieved particular milestones by a certain age, and employees in most organisations will have clear guidelines on their personal conduct and professional expectations. If we fall outside of set parameters, this is considered 'abnormal'. Since disciplinary power is based on hierarchical observation this 'sets the accepted standards within the organisation' (Oliver, 2010: 58). Normalising judgment denotes the way we are expected to fit into social norms. Rabinow (1986: 196) stated that normalising 'imposes homogeneity' and therefore within individuals it becomes 'possible to measure gaps to determine levels'. This allows comparisons to be made between individuals, since norms establish the yardstick, i.e. what is considered normal or abnormal. The threat of being 'judged abnormal constraints us moderns at every turn' (Gutting, 2005: 84), and the fear of being judged or labelled abnormal results in individuals conforming to expected social norms, which Foucault described as an assault on our freedom (Foucault, 1977; 1991a). This conformity stifles individualism and creativity. In the work environment normalising judgement performs a role that is similar to micro-management whereby people become their own judges and self-regulate their own behaviour. They become 'docile bodies', compliant individuals who will do what is expected of them. When applying to the HE environment within an institution, surveillance is conducted through an academics' performance for their student evaluation, or even

at a programme level, this may be via programme metrics, such as the NSS or DHLE. Expected institutional norms for teaching metrics, may class some programmes or individual lecturers as outside of these expected boundaries. The normalising judgement here, may result in pressure by academics to self-regulate their behaviour and conform to the expectation.

The final element of discipline power is the examination, which is the recording and documenting of individuals' performance. In the work environment this may include an employee's attendances, absences, punctuality or any disciplinary actions. Foucault noted that within organisations, 'members had to be evaluated [...] pupils, teachers, nurses, doctors and factory workers, had to be assessed in relation to their capacity to comply with the accepted norms of the institution' (Oliver, 2010: 59). The examination tells us the extent to which an individual is within or outside of the norm, effectively turning the individual into a 'case' (Foucault, 1977).

2.4.4 Governmentality

The origins of the term governmentality are derived from an abbreviation of 'governmental rationality' (Kerr, 1999: 174). Governmentality has been defined as the 'dramatic expansion in the scope of government, featuring an increase in the number and size of the governmental calculation mechanisms' (Hunt and Wickham, 1994: 76). An alternative definition is provided by Mayhew (2004) who describes governmentality as a medium for the state to control its population, in order to achieve government policies. Foucault defined governmentality as the 'ensemble

formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections [...] allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population [...]’ (Foucault, 1991b: 102). Fundamentally, this all points towards governmentality as a form of power driven by the state to achieve policy outcomes.

Although Foucault (1991b) makes a broader use of the term ‘State’, as not only referring to government but to all institutions exerting control, governmentality is described as the ‘art of government’. Hence, academic institutions can also be a type of government. Burchell (1991: 102) denotes that governmentality allows the state to ensure ‘maintenance of a well-ordered and happy society’. In this context the government is an ‘organised political power’ (Huff, no date: online). Therefore, given that power controls and directs society, Huff states that ‘governmentality views power as productive’ (ibid). Since governmentality aims ‘to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons’ (Gordon, 1991: 2), this implies that the role of governmentality is ‘self-regulation’. For instance, initiatives such as ‘5 a day’ and ‘change4life’ are designed and led by the government to encourage citizens to take responsibility for their health, by adapting a healthy lifestyle. Other such examples of government initiatives include ‘clunk-click’ to encourage people to wear a seat belt, stop smoking initiatives, ‘couch to 5K’ and more recently the ‘sugar-tax’. This in turn will reduce the burden on the NHS in the long term, allowing citizens to live a long and happy life. Governmentality is the government’s way of producing the citizens who are best suited to fulfilling government policies; these initiatives are a form of power, which exist to make citizens more governable.

The same approach can also be applied to government led HE reviews; the link between engaging with HE via university and social mobility (UK Government, 2011) is well documented. Students engaging with HE will have better mental health, a bigger income, and better social mobility and support, so that they contribute to society. By extension, this impacts on their future families and their future selves as a result of increased social capital. All the reviews since Robbins in 1963 have had social mobility as a rationale for the expansion of HE, making it accessible to all. For instance, students within HE can boost the economy by £80 billion (Lock, 2015) and, whilst graduates do earn more than non-graduates, women can earn as much as £250,000 over their lifetime with a degree when compared to no degree (Britton, 2017). Foucault extends the concept of governmentality to the term 'neoliberal governmentality', 'which is a form of post-welfare state politics, in which the state essentially outsources the responsibility for ensuring the well-being of the population' (Schechter, 2010: online). The government has passed the mantle to universities to be proactive with recruitment strategies for widening participation, and this is a visible component within the TEF.

2.4.5 Power and Knowledge

In his book 'The order of things: an archaeology of human sciences' (1989: 81) Foucault presented the concept of discourse, which is 'representation itself' – and that there are 'modes of discourse for each of the institutions and sectors of society' (Oliver, 2010: 27). These modes of discourse can be considered as knowledge that is

specific to that sector of society or institution. For instance, doctors will be fluent in using specialised medical terminology with other doctors, yet these specialised terms are not likely to be understood by those without any medical training. This specialised knowledge, or discourse, results in increased power. Oliver (2010: 32) writes that the 'discourse of a particular profession is partly responsible for sustaining the power of that profession'. Taking this into consideration, the use of power by those that hold it can result in exercising control and authority over others. Therefore, knowledge leads to power, which Gutting (2005: 53) describes as being 'logically compatible'. Brainwashing or government propaganda could be considered in this context. This is summarised thus by Foucault (1977: 27) when he claims that there is no 'power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge'. Therefore, power requires knowledge and knowledge generates power (Oliver, 2010: 38).

2.4.6 Dataveillance

Disciplinary power is based on the principle of observation and surveillance, which in the modern era is facilitated by technology. Selwyn (2015: 64) explained how over the last two decades there has been an increase in 'recording, storage, manipulation and distribution of data in digital form', which is now on an unprecedented scale. Technology has facilitated the growth of data, but this data is also open to surveillance itself. Personal data is collected from birth; we record our own work history and qualifications and display these via platforms such as LinkedIn. We record and share our day to day mundane events, share our anger and opinions, celebrate

our happiest events as well commiserate loss and sorrow via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other platforms. Lives are recorded digitally to be revisited at any moment, welcomed or unwelcomed, with potential repercussions.

Lupton (2016: 101) defines dataveillance as 'personal data that are now generated by the digital surveillance of individuals'. An earlier definition by Clark (1998: 499 cited in Orito, 2011: 6) defined dataveillance as 'systematic use of personal data systems in the investigation or monitoring of the actions or communications of one or more persons'. The act of investigating and monitoring an individual's actions demonstrates an invasion of privacy (Orito, 2011), which may be for the purpose of blackmail or exposure, or alternatively, the very threat of this may act as a form of hierarchical observation, intended for the self-regulation of behaviour. The wider impact of this, as Couldry and Yu (2018: 4473) described, is a potentially 'negative impact on person autonomy and human freedom', which is what Foucault (1977) was concerned with as an impact of hierarchical observation. The quasi-marketisation of HE functions on the availability of data, allowing comparisons to be made between institutions, their success, achievements and failures. Dataveillance is an important and significant concept relative to this study, since the monitoring, recoding and tracking of HE metrics, such as the NSS, DLHE, are crucial elements of the TEF.

2.5 Marketisation of HE in the UK

This section will further explore the marketisation of HE, its manifestations as represented in teaching metrics, the role of the student within the educational transaction and finally the impact upon academics working in HE in the 21st century.

2.5.1 Definitions and origins

Hill (2007: 2016) refers to neoliberal ideology within education as 'the businessification' of education, represented by the government led sale of schools which were built and financed with private money. The introduction of tuition fees in 1998 instantly changed the role of the student into a consumer, the university into a service provider, with education as a commodity. On a par with the outcome of the Education Act (2002) in which universities, clearly signposted as gold, silver or bronze, will operate in England, the introduction of the HERA allowing new providers to be granted degree awarding powers, will create a 'free market' setting. This completes the marketization of education, having already pervaded schools, FE and now HE. Clear evidence is shown in sections 2.2 and 2.3 of the gradual entry of neoliberal practices within HE government reviews, which have been developed further upon each successive review. Robbins (1963) expanded HE with the creation of new universities, and by the nineties, an additional 35 universities were created through the Further and Higher Act (1992). Dearing (1997) recommended that students contribute to their education, since they benefit from it, and set guidelines for the governance of institutions. Browne (2010) expanded this further, recommending that students bear the main cost of their education, meaning that

there was a need to increase fees. Terminology such as ‘fees’, ‘debt’, and ‘loans’ figure heavily in students’ decisions regarding education. At the heart of each review was social mobility and the opportunities for disadvantaged students to benefit from higher education. Expanding education through neoliberal policies was designed to help disadvantage students; however, applications for entry in 2018/19 reveal that only 16.1% of applicants are from disadvantage backgrounds representing an increase of just 0.4% over the previous year. Furthermore, the gap between the most and least advantaged groups remains the same (UCAS, 2018).

The marketisation of education is a ‘global phenomenon’ (Ball, 2007), with the rise of neoliberal ideology coinciding with the rise of globalisation (Olssen and Peters, 2005). This global phenomenon saw neoliberal educational policies evident within HE across the globe including, USA, Australia, China, India, Sweden, Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh (Kabir, 2013; Ek *et al*, 2013; Mok and Lo, 2007; Le Ha and Barnawi, 2015). The next section will focus on the wider impact of marketisation of HE in the UK. Marketisation is perceived to be a threat to academic autonomy, even if the HERA (2017) states otherwise (Ek *et al*, 2013; HERA, 2017).

2.5.2 New Public Management (NPM)

To address the binary divide that existed between former polytechnics and universities, Dearing (1997) focused on governance within institutions which represents the introduction of accountability culture within HE. Marginson (2013: 354) explains that ‘neoliberal discourse has been taken into policy and regulation’, which is visible within the New Public Management (NPM). This places an emphasis on ‘audit, accountability as well as transparency and individuation’ (ibid). This is now

manifested within HE as a new mode of regulation a form of governmentality, which is defined by the 'self-interested individual, free market economics and a commitment to self – regulation' (Olssen and Peters, 2005: 314). Consequently 'intellectual enquiry is replaced by institutional performativity' (ibid: 313), meaning that the focus on performance directly 'affects the university's role as a free and critical voice' (Ek *et al*, 2013: 1306). This may contribute towards a panoptic effect across institutions (Foucault, 1991), with external surveillance presented as 'specification of outputs and performance measurement' (Cuthbert, 2016: 50), collected in the form of teaching metrics.

2.6 Manifestations of the marketisation of HE through metrics

Freire and Freire (1996; 1998) explain that teaching should be based on a pedagogy in which 'all grow', emphasizing that teaching is very much a two-way process with both the student and the teacher learning together. Ingleby (2015: 518) rationalises that the neoliberalism agenda will in turn shape the 'educational context' and by that notion would hinder a pedagogy in which 'all grow'. Browne (2010) focused on 'enhancing the role of student choice', as a means to 'drive up quality' (ibid: 28-29), but Browne felt that there was a gap in the information students could access in order to make an informed decision. More than 50 years later, the government delivered HERA (2017) under the same premise. Browne (2010) highlighted three main groups of metrics (see table 13), that would be useful for students' use when deciding between institutions; these are student evaluation, course information and finance information.

Table 13: Metrics proposed to assist student choice

Metric	Components
Student evaluation	Standard of teaching, course details, support and guidance, feedback on assessments, library and IT facilities
Course information	Contact time, coursework weighting of overall assessments, employment rate one-year post graduation, average graduate salary
Finance information	Cost of university accommodation, availability of bursaries.

(Source: Browne review, 2010: 30)

Many of these metrics were already in use at the time of the Browne review, including information on graduates' employment and the National Student Survey, which is described as 'part of the battery of tools that privilege a consumer view of the student' (Fanghanel, 2012: 55). In contrast, Gibbs (2010: 7) foregrounds the use of adopting educational practices, since there was 'clear evidence that educational performance and educational gains can be enhanced' as a result. The next section will focus on these core methods of student evaluation, which are also components of the TEF and league tables.

2.6.1 The National Student Survey (NSS)

The National Student Survey (NSS) was first completed in 2005 (revised in 2017), aimed at final year undergraduate students across the UK. The NSS asks students for their opinions on 'what it has been like to study on their course at their university', and hence gives 'students a powerful collective voice' (NSS, no date: online). The original survey instrument, administered and managed by Ipsos MORI, was commissioned under the remit of OfS. The survey consisted of 27 questions, and - institutions can select two questions to include (see table 14). The final question, number 27, states that 'overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course'.

The OfS emphasized that the NSS gathers students' views to inform choice, improve the student experience and to 'support public accountability' and is thus is a 'powerful weapon for students' (Office for Students, no date b: online). The language used here fully endorses the role of the NSS, with its contribution towards the NPM of universities via the word 'accountability', and with the use of 'weapon' which implies that students are to use the NSS to retaliate against their lecturers. The language used by the OfS implies that students have power via the NSS, and it harbours the negative connotation associated with battle. For staff this could be perceived as having a panoptic effect and presents them as occupying a position of resistance or defence as a result (Foucault, 1977).

Table 14: NSS statement themes and the contribution of TEF

NSS statement themes	Statement number	Contribution towards the TEF award
The teaching on my course	1,2,3,4	Questions 1,2,3,4
Learning opportunities	5,6,7	Questions 5,6,7
Assessment and feedback	8,9,10,11	Questions 8,9,10,11
Academic support	12,13,14	Question 12
Organisation and management	15,16,17	-
Learning resources	18,19,20	-
Learning community	21,22	-
Student voice	23,24,25,26	-
Overall satisfaction	27	-

(adapted from NSS, no date: online; Department for Business Innovation and Skill, 2016).

The NSS has always been controversial, in a recent article for HEPI, Budd (2019: online) described the NSS, as 'unfit for purpose'. The consistent increase in student satisfaction has been attributed in part to the pressure placed on lecturers to strive towards 'providing what students appear to want' (Norton, 2016: 156). Fanghanel (2012: 53) argues that the NSS represents an evaluation of 'the student experience'

since the questions 'indirectly pass judgement on academics performance'. The Survey interrogates how staff have made things interesting and their enthusiasm when teaching. Fanghanel (ibid) maintains that this implies that academic staff are viewed as a 'commodity' with a role to entertain rather than teach students. Students' own learning and engagement means they have different interpretations over the terminology used by the NSS questions (Bennett and Kane, 2014). For instance, there can be a difference in understanding of the terms 'prompt' and 'fair' in relation to assessment feedback.

Conversely, there is a correlation between courses which score weakly within the organisation and management group, focussing on how well the course is running and the effectiveness of the timetable. This may correspond with a lower NSS score overall (Langan *et al* 2015), despite the fact that this group does not measure teaching. Comparing institutions is problematic as there are variations between students at pre-92 and post-92 institutions; the former are more satisfied (Bachan, 2017), with Russell group institutions scoring higher. Clinical degrees and humanities courses have a higher NSS score than engineering and media degrees (Bell and Brooks, 2018). Thus, there needs to be a cautious approach when comparing subjects and institutions (Langan *et al*, 2013; Bell and Brooks, 2018), particularly since the NSS is considered a 'gross oversimplification of a 3- or 4-year degree' (Holligan and Shah, 2017: 114).

2.6.2 Destination of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) survey

Norton (2016: 155) discusses the role of universities rapidly as changing and 'becoming training grounds for employment, rather than seats of learning'. Ingleby makes an association between education and employment (Ingleby, 2015: 520). Given that students' post-graduation employment, in the form of the Destination of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) survey contributes to University leagues tables, supports Norton's statement. The DLHE survey, which ran from 2008 to 2018, was a statistical survey that all UK and EU students completed six months post-graduation, with the aim to determine if students were now employed or in further study. This was followed up three and a half years later with the DLHE longitudinal survey, to provide a more detailed picture of the student, four years post-graduation (HESA, no date, a). DLHE was replaced by the Graduate Outcomes Survey, which is managed by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), with the first survey conducted in December 2018 and results due in Spring 2020 (HESA, no date b). The main difference between the DLHE survey and new survey is that graduates participate in the survey '15 months after graduation', allowing for a better understanding of their careers, as opposed to six months post-graduation (Graduate Outcome, no date: online; Office for students, no date, c). The survey also includes some subjective questions, such as how graduates are now feeling about their current situation.

Traditionally, DLHE figures and student employability is a core element of university league tables. However, many factors influence a student's employability and outcomes following graduation, which are not considered by the DLHE or even the new Graduate Outcome Survey. For instance, graduates that have been privately

schooled are a 'third more likely to enter high status occupations', then graduates who attended state schools. The more selective the institution, the higher the graduates' salary and outcomes. This is due to differences between 'educational attainment and university selection' (MacMillan *et al*, 2015: 487). This latter statement implies that the university the student attends will make a difference to that student's outcomes, with students from Oxbridge earning a salary 42% higher than post-92 institutions and 17% higher than Russell group institutions (de Vries, 2014). A report commissioned by the Russell Group showed that their students achieved a 'higher net graduate premium' (Russell Group, 2017: 17), whilst for students from post-92 institutions, the 'student debt outweighs the graduate premium' (Bailey, 2016: online), since this is compensated for by increased levels of taxation. Some of the wealthiest students attending Russell group institutions pay their tuition fees in advance thereby saving interest fees later, with some 10% of undergraduates choosing to do so (Student International, 2019). Furthermore, this gap is compounded when analysing the outcome of subjects studied at degree level, with medicine, dentistry and STEM graduates earning more than those with arts degrees (ibid).

Universities change and continue to evolve and as part of this create their identity. The Further and Higher Education Act (1992) removed the binary divide and awarded 35 polytechnics university status, and some three decades earlier Robbins had created six new universities (Robbins Review, 1963). Despite successive governments attempting to diminish the binary divide (e.g. Dearing, 1997), universities further created more divides by branding themselves into distinct groups. Following the

introduction of league tables in 1993, 'old universities' branded themselves into the 'Russell Group' in 1994. 'New' universities formed their own groups such as Million + and Alliance Universities. This has further grouped and branded institutions, with the Russell Group considered to be 'elite', as characterised by their 'research activity, greater wealth, greater academic success and socio-economically advantaged student intakes' (Boliver, 2015: 608). Therefore, despite similar levels of teaching quality to post-92 institutions, these factors contribute and enhance students' graduate outcomes (ibid).

2.6.3 Good honours and grade inflation

When reviewing literature concerning students within HE, it is not uncommon for discussions to centre on students as the product of the marketised university, therefore students are not entering HE for the 'intellectual experience' (Norton, 2016: 155) yet seek to 'have a degree' rather than 'be learners' (Molesworth *et al*, 2009: 277). There remains a consistent increase with the number of good honours (first class and upper second-class degrees) being awarded over the last decade (Office for Students, 2018f). This is not restricted to the UK, but is the case globally, with the USA demonstrating a 'prevalence and severity' of grade inflation for many years (Carter and Lara, 2016: 346). The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) announced that they would be working with Universities UK and Guild HE to 'address the issue of UK degree classifications' (QAA, 2018: online). This will focus on the significant increase in first class degrees being awarded with an aim of identifying the characteristics of a first class and an upper second class (2:1) degree.

Research by the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA), which was commissioned by Universities UK and others, highlights that there is a necessity to investigate the rising numbers of good honours, since this may 'erode the practical usefulness of the honours classification' (UKSCQA, 2018: 3). Additionally, there are 'risks undermining confidence in the integrity of academic standards', which will harm the perception of HE as well as devaluating education. The UK Government (2018b: online) also added that universities will be 'discouraged' from inflating degrees and that universities need to take a 'responsive approach to degree grading'.

Good honours have increased from 61% to currently 75% over a 10-year period, with first class honours doubling from 13% to 26%, meaning that a quarter of all graduates are now awarded a first-class degree (Office for Students, 2018f). This corresponds with fees increasing to £9,000 following the Browne review (2010), with a notable spike in good honours occurring from 1997 onwards, corresponding to the Dearing review (1997), which led to the initial introduction of tuition fees (Richmond, 2018). Similarly, upper second class (2:1) classifications have risen by 5% annually and now represent a 55% overall increase (UKSCQA, 2018; Office for Students, 2018f).

Hindmarsh (2018) writing for HEPI, states that the rise of good honours cannot be explained by students entering HE with higher entry grades, in fact HEFCE (2018) reports that 17% of students with entry grades below CCD now are awarded first class degrees. However, factors such as better teaching quality and the use of full marking scales have contributed to students achieving better outcomes. This is supported by UKSCQA (2018: online), which adds that no 'single action is the cause

of the increase'. Nevertheless, contributions in relation to genuine improvements regarding teaching should be acknowledged. UKSCQA also recommends a 're-calibration of quality assurance', to maintain the integrity and value of degrees. Bachan (2017: 1580) offers a different standpoint, maintaining that 'grade inflation may reflect falling standards in UK higher education', as opposed to changes made pedagogically. Bronze award universities have seen a 9% increase in overall good honours, compared to a 6% increase for gold award universities (Hindmarsh, 2018). It is not clear if this is the result of an improvement in teaching at bronze award universities or grade inflation. The Office for Students (2018f; 2018g) identified that out of 148 providers, 52% were unable to explain why there a significant increase in overall good honours has been, particularly first-class degrees.

Students with a good honours degree are more likely to be accepted onto graduate schemes, which results in better financial outcomes for them. For universities this graduate employability data is reflected in the TEF as well as league tables, where it has an impact with lasting repercussions. Moreover, Richmond (2018) states that there is considerable pressure placed on university senior managers given the consumerist approach by students coupled with league table led competition between universities. Recommendations to address grade inflation emphasize that external examiners such as QAA, TEF, OfS, as well as professional bodies were all stakeholders that needed to work synergistically to tackle this perceived issue.

2.6.4 Consumerism

Since students started paying tuition fees towards their education they have been categorised as consumers. The government has referred to students as ‘customers’ (Dearing, 1997). Students have a choice⁶ over where they go and have a powerful voice expressed via the NSS. Students have a choice over where they study and to facilitate that choice, universities are courting students with unconditional offers, in what can be seen as a desperate attempt to secure them. The OfS have described this as ‘pressure selling’ and is concerned about the negative and long-term impact of unconditional offers. In fact, research has shown that unconditional offers have resulted in higher non-continuation rates; such offers constitute as much as 40% of all offers from low tariff institutions and 35% of all students have received an unconditional offer (Office for Students, no date, d). The rise of unconditional offers has increased from 2013 onwards, therefore it is no surprise to note that tuition fees increased to £9,000 in the 2012-2013 academic year.

The HERA (2017) puts students at the heart of the creation of the Office for Students. Student satisfaction surveys, such as the NSS, place the student as a consumer. There is a perception by academics that since the introduction of tuition fees students have been ‘increasing demonstration of customer – like behaviour’ (Jabbar *et al*, 2018: 85). This has been termed spoon feeding; extra guidance, extra support, the checking of coursework in advance of submission and selective attendance, have all become

⁶ Whilst students have a choice, it would be incorrect to assume that all students have equal choice options available to them. Students from poorer backgrounds are likely to have less choice in term of the institutions to apply for.

a source of frustration for academics. It should be acknowledged that students entering HE are the product of having been taught in schools and colleges that have for years been subject to their own marketisation (see section 2.4.5). They are used to being taught in a particular way with levels of staff support, therefore it is no surprise that they may approach HE with the same expectations. It is also important to point out that there has been a major increase in issues surrounding students' mental health. This has been explained and analysed in chapter 1 and highlights how students' reactions need to be considered in this context.

A study by Bunce *et al* (2017) surveyed over 600 undergraduate students in relation to their consumer attitudes. Their research showed that there was a stronger consumerist attitude if a student has performed poorly in assessed work, with students studying a STEM subject displaying a stronger consumer attitude than students on non-STEM degrees. Tomlinson (2017: 45) stated that whilst there is evidence of a consumer approach this does not 'fundamentally capture their [students] perspective and relationships to HE'. When interviewed, students commented on their degrees having to demonstrate 'value for money', in relation to 'contact time', and in relation to 'facilities' offered by their institutions. Fanghanel (2012: 56) explains that academics' views of the student as consumer has 'focussed on performance and satisfaction rather than conceptualizing learning'. As a result, teaching is based upon what the students need to know in terms of the relevance of a topic to an assessment or exam, as opposed to learning for the intellectual experience. Therefore, knowledge has become, commodified. The impact of this upon academics will be examined as one of the themes in the next section.

2.6.5 Pressures on academics

It is often the case that academics have little control over their changing work landscape. Chapter 1 outlined some of the major influences in relation to the HE landscape in England, one of which is the state of students' and academics' mental health. Increased workloads and pressures have resulted in over half of UK academics showing signs of mental health issues (see Chapter 1). It is necessary to explore the factors that have contributed to this and therefore this section will investigate some wider impacts on academics attributable to the changing HE landscape.

The accountability culture of HE has meant that academics are managed and controlled; this has been referred to as the 'deprofessionalisation of academic work' (Trow, 2002: 31, cited in Fanghanel, 2012: 16). In contrast, successive government reviews have referred to the professionalisation of academic staff in terms of teaching qualifications (Robbins Review, 1963; Dearing Review, 1997; Browne Review, 2010). The term 'managerialism' is often used in conjunction with NPM, referencing 'the application of private sector management approaches to the public sector' (Fanghanel, 2012: 15). Deem and Johnson (2000) noted a trend for academics to hold management positions which has led to the terminology of the 'managed-academic' and 'academic-manager'. Deem and Brehony (2005: 226) define manager-academics as those holding positions such as heads of department, roles within teaching or research, and extending to the senior management positions of Vice Chancellors and Pro-Vice Chancellors. Winter (2009) expands upon Deem and

Johnson's (2000) use of such terminology and how this may contribute to a schism in academic identity.

Fanghanel (2012: 16) notes that managerialism within universities 'translates into systems and processes', which is facilitated by internal surveys, virtual learning and more recently via lecture capture. This contributes to the notion of the 'managed-academic', an academic who feels a sense of being managed with systems and processes acting as a form of surveillance, a threat to academic autonomy. That same right to freedom and academic autonomy is defended within HERA (Department for Business Innovation and Skill, 2016). The impact of managerialism has shown to have 'significantly affected academic practices and cultures' (Fanghanel, 2012: 20). Henkel (2005: 155) states that academic identities are formed and sustained and central to this is academic autonomy. Recent research by Taberner (2018: 1) highlights six main themes which academics feel represent the impact of marketisation.

These can be seen in table 15:

Table 15: Impact of marketisation upon academics

1. Efficiency and quantity over effectiveness
2. Autocratic, managerialist ideology over academic democracy and debate
3. Instrumentalism over intellectualism
4. De-professionalisation and fragmentation of the academy
5. Increased incidence of performativity, bullying and workplace aggression
6. Work intensification

(Source: Taberner 2018: 1)

The study also identifies that these impacts are more significant for staff working at post-92 institutions. Bunce *et al* (2017: 1971) adds that there is a 'negative impact of fee responsibility on academic performance' when consumer orientation is

considered. This is further manifested as stress with an impact on academics' mental health, frustration and a fundamental change in teaching pedagogy.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter will outline the research design and provides an exploration of the underlying paradigms and the epistemological stance of this research. The data collection approach is framed by my own personal position and reflexivity.

3.1 Epistemology and theoretical perspective

I applied Crotty's four elements to the research design, whereby the choice of epistemology for the study is dictated by the theoretical perspective, which in turn influences the methodology and methods (Crotty, 1998). The line of questioning centres around participants' views on aspects of the HERA and the impact of the TEF upon the teaching and learning culture of their institution. The different participants for this study were selected on the basis of roles they held (see table 16). This research reflects a constructivist epistemology, following the doctrine that knowledge is constructed through experience. 'Knowledge about the world does not simply exist out there, waiting to be discovered, but is rather constructed by human beings in their interaction with the world' (Kincheloe, 2000 cited by Gordon, 2009: 39). In this case there is a desire to explore views regarding the TEF, views that may be shaped at least in part by a participant's position and roles in the institution.

A constructivist approach means that knowledge is constructed as a consequence of 'engagement with realities of the world' (Crotty, 1998: 8). Ritchie *et al* (2014: 13) places an emphasis on constructionism that 'knowledge is actively constructed by humans, rather than passively received'. Flick (2014: 76) concurs with previous views on constructionism by adding that 'realities we study are social products of the

actors, of interactions and institutions. Since knowledge is constructed because of subjects' interactions with the world, hence 'multiple, contradictory but equal valid accounts of the world can exist' (Grey, 2018: 122).

3.1.1 Qualitative reasoning

The inductive approach is by its nature a bottom up approach, where a hypothesis is constructed after data collection. The data analysis allows for the generation of patterns, themes and trends from which theories or hypotheses can be constructed (Grey, 2018). With inductive approaches there is no 'preordained' hypothesis, but the possibility of many outcomes; conversely deductive reasoning is based upon testing a preset hypothesis (O'Leary, 2007: 56). Inductive reasoning allows for many outcomes, rather than confirm a hypothesis, and this is one reason Roller and Lavarkas (2015: 7) described qualitative reasoning as 'messy'.

This research adopts an inductive approach to identify reactions to the HERA and the TEF, attempting to 'capture data on the perception from the inside, through deep attentiveness, empathetic understanding and with no preconception about topics under discussion' (Punch, 2014: 119). The inductive approach also reflects the epistemological underpinning of the research design. Qualitative approaches are concerned with interpretivism, ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology and case studies; this is a small selection and certainly not an exhaustive list (Creswell, 2007; Grey, 2018; Saunders, 2016). The theoretical perspective of this research and the philosophical stance that informs the methodology is based upon interpretivism, since the research focuses on 'understanding and interpreting' the captured 'human

interactions' (Carson *et al*, 2001: 5; Black, 2006). The complexity of the human condition adds to the diversity of this study, since 'research is of specific relevance to the study of social relations' (Flick, 2014: 11), with an aim to gain a holistic overview (Punch, 2014). Researchers using an interpretivist approach tend to have some knowledge and insight of the research topic. I have outlined in Chapter 1 my own background and experiences that have contributed to this research idea.

3.1.2 Design of study

The epistemological positioning of this study reflects a constructivist approach and hence knowledge is constructed as a result of engagement with reality. This makes the approach of the case study a relevant methodological consideration and I made the decision to implement an exploratory single site case study. Yin (2009: 13) defined the case study research method 'as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context'. Since this study focused on the staff perceptions of the TEF within their post-92 institution, the decision to use a case study approach offered a 'rich method for investigating and researching a single case' (Widdowson, 2011: 26), with a single institution the focus of the current study (see Baxter and Jack, 2008: 544). This would allow for exploration of a single organisation and the views of staff from that organisation.

There are many different approaches to case studies, and the one applied here is considered to be of the exploratory typology. Exploratory case studies are useful when researching areas that are new or unexplored, thus providing a detailed understanding of a particular subject (Yin, 2003). In addition, this approach allowed

data to be considered within a particular context, and here the context for the study was the introduction of the TEF. Not only is the TEF relatively new in terms of the historical context of HE, but research regarding the framework within HE is also new (and hence limited). Whilst there are many cited advantages of adopting a case study approach (such as detailed insight, consideration of the context and real-life applications; Yin, 2009; Grey, 2019), Chadderton and Torrance (2012: 54) cited 'that it is not possible to generalise from one or a small number of case studies'. Nonetheless, case studies, in particular those that are exploratory, are able to highlight and open up the possibility of further research of a previously unexplored area.

The purpose of this study is to examine a significant change within the HE landscape, with the introduction of the HERA and the subsequent TEF awards. The TEF2 awards were made available to participating institutions on 19th June 2017, with the TEF3 awards released on 6th June 2018. Two sets of interviews were conducted with the same participants, the first between October and November 2017, after the TEF2 award. The second set was conducted during June and July 2018; after the TEF3 award. This time participants were presented with a copy of their transcripts and the line of questioning focused on their responses from the first interview, exploring these in further detail.

This study collected data on two separate occasions over a period of eight months. Somekh and Lewin (2012: 325) point out that a longitudinal study 'refers to research which takes place over time in order to track changes and development', and that

‘shorter studies cannot really be called longitudinal’. This study is not considered longitudinal since the data was collected over eight months. I collected data over two points in time, since this would allow for any actions or outcomes resulting from the TEF awards to become more apparent or noticeable, therefore contributing to the richness of the data. The TEF process and the subsequent TEF award is new for institutions. Collecting data over two periods of time meant that participants would have an opportunity to update their knowledge on the TEF, learn more about the TEF and its impact across HE, and discuss any changes that have taken place as a direct result of the TEF.

3.1.3 Positioning and reflexivity

In Chapter 1, I explained my own background and experiences as a programme leader which has contributed to this research topic. As Corlett and Mavin (2017) state, ‘positionality is the practice of a researcher delineating his or her own position in relation to the study’. I have been explicit and felt it necessary to explain my professional role and how my thoughts have focused on aspects of my day to day role. Positionality ‘reflects the position that the researcher has chosen to adopt’ (Savin - Baden and Howell-Major 2013: 71). In other words, my own views and characteristics have influenced how I will interpret my data (Bourke, 2014). This reinforces the epistemological and theoretical perspectives for this study, namely constructivism and interpretivism; truth and meaning are created by subjects’ interactions with the world (Grey, 2018).

Sikes (2004) asserts that researchers should spend time considering their own positionality, since assumptions held may affect their research. Charmaz (2006) discusses that interpretative researchers need to be reflexive. Somekh and Lewin (2012: 328) consider reflexivity as a 'process of reflection with self — critical analysis', and an awareness of the 'impact they [the researcher] necessarily have on the research data they collect'. Berger, (2015: 221) states that 'reflexivity is crucial throughout all phases of the research process, including the formation of the research question', yet 'the researcher and the research cannot be meaningfully separated' (Koch, 1998 cited in Hand, 2003: 15). The notion of reflexivity clearly acknowledges that researchers themselves will become part of the data or at the very least will affect or influence the data. Dupuis (1999) adds that 'we adopt a reflexive methodology in leisure studies, a qualitative methodology more in keeping with the theoretical orientations with which we profess to be working' (Dupis, 1999: 43).

3.1.4 The 'insider' researcher

Floyd and Linet (2012) discuss issues regarding morality and ethics when conducting educational research. In particular, their focus on the increase of Doctor of Education (EdD) degrees, which are practitioner led. Subsequently research may focus on the students' own practice or their institution. Ultimately it is for convenience that, as an EdD student and HE practitioner, I have been opportunistic and conducted research within my own institution with participants who are also colleagues. In addition, all

of my supervisory team are employed at the same institution as me. This all contributed to the notion of the 'insider researcher'.

The insider researcher is defined by Merton (1972) as particular groups of researchers considered as 'privileged', due to their knowledge or 'lived familiarity with the group being researched' (Mercer, 2007: 3). Researchers can be considered as 'absolute insiders or outsiders', which is based on the notions of identity and status (ibid: 22). In terms of my own experience as an insider researcher, I am familiar with the institution, its values and organisational culture. The advantages this created for me as a researcher included access to high profile participants, the ability to establish rapport quickly and finally a 'share frame of reference', since we share the same organisational culture and knowledge (Mercer, 2007). Since this research is a single site case study, these advantages have created a richness of data, invaluable for exploring a relatively new research area with limited literature. Conversely, research ethics remain a concern even beyond completion of the thesis research. These I have addressed in section 3.2.1 which I detailed the ethical procedures that I adhered to. I have also considered my own positionality and how I fit into this research, which was the purpose of chapter 1. During the data collection period, I made a conscious decision to only include data that I had collected during the formal interview process. This meant the need to not include information (or data) that I had heard informally during 'watercooler conversations'. I also did not include any data that were disclosed to me once I had turned off the audio recording device. In many incidents, participants and I chatted after I had stopped recording; sometimes about the weather, but sometimes an extension of the interview. I

deliberately choose not to use these data, since I had stopped recording (I made a point of informing participants that I was stopping recording now), since I did not wish to abuse my position.

3.2 Selection and profile of participants

The research explores a snapshot of staff beliefs during a particular stage of the implementation of the TEF, for one post-92 institution. The timing coincided with the period of reaction to the institution's TEF award and encompasses a range of academics within the institution. These academics held different posts and had varying roles and responsibilities within the same institution. Saunders (2016) advocate the use of carrying out a high number of interviews until data saturation has been reached, although Seidmann (2013: 58) is reluctant to dictate the number of interviews that should be carried out, but does state, albeit vaguely, 'more than less'. I was not looking for data saturation; the sample for this research was already defined in part by the academic aims of this research (see Chapter 1), and by the research subject and scope. The sampling strategy utilized for this research is non-random sampling, with participants approached due to the expert positions they held and 'identified because they are known to enable the exploration of a particular behavior or characteristics relevant to the research' (Grey, 2018: 174). The academic participants here are experts since they all have insight of their institution's policy and practices. They would be the participants that would yield the most information. All of the nine academics approached to participate in this research accepted - table 16 outlines the profiles of the participants.

Table 16: Profile of participants

Participant code	Position	Role	Category
P1	Senior Lecturer	Senior lecturer within a large programme, with a year manager role	Managed academic
P2	Senior Lecturer	Programme Leader for an UG degree course	Managed academic
P3	Senior Lecturer	Programme Leader for a PG degree course	Managed academic
P4	Senior Lecturer	Programme Leader for a PG degree course	Managed academic
P5	Senior manager for the university	Senior manager with responsibility for a variety of degree programmes	Academic Manager
P6	Senior manager for the university	Senior manager with responsibility for education	Academic Manager
P7	Senior manager for the university	Senior manager with responsibility for teaching and learning	Academic Manager
P8	Senior manager for the university	Senior manager with responsibility for education	Academic Manager
P9	Senior manager for the university	Senior manager with responsibility for student employability	Academic Manager

In seeking to identify a profile of participants who were representative of the range, roles and levels of responsibility in the institution, I drew upon Deem and Johnson (2000) who argue that there is now an increased trend for academics to hold a management position. Consequently, this has now created a division of category, which they refer to as 'manager-academics' (to describe those in a management position) versus 'academics not in a management role'. Deem and Brehony (2005: 226) define manager-academics as holding positions such as head of department or quality roles with teaching or research and extending to the senior management position of Vice Chancellor and Pro-Vice Chancellor. Winter (2009) expands upon Deem and Johnson's (2000) use of such terminology and demonstrates how this may contribute to a schism in academic identity. Winter (2009: 121) explores how this

'identity schism contributes to the value of academics, as either congruent (the academic manager) or incongruent (the managed academic)'. The participants for this study have been categorized as either 'academic-managers' or 'managed-academic', based solely upon the positions and roles they occupy.

3.2.1 Ethics

This research has ethical clearance and adheres to Manchester Metropolitan University's ethical frameworks and guideline procedures. Some of the participants were known to me, therefore it was necessary for me to consider their welfare by minimising any issues of conflict and confidentiality. Palaiologou (2016: 50) outlines key ethical components of research, which should be considered, and which were communicated to participations.

This included:

- Consent, assent and dissent
- Privacy
- Confidentiality and anonymity
- Trust
- The right to withdraw and the right not to participate

Participants' information sheets (see section 6.2.2) were sent in advance to them outlining the aim and purpose of the study. All participants agreed to take part in the study, citing the research theme of the TEF as the main reason for wanting to take part. Participants' confidentiality was a priority, with their identities coded to maintain anonymity. I also gave participants the option to view how I would be coding them, and the descriptions used to describe their roles and positions. All participants had the right to withdraw at any point in the study, with their data being

removed from the analysis; this was made clear on the participant information sheet and also the consent form. In order to ensure an accurate representation of participants' views, a copy of their transcript was provided to them ahead of the follow up interview. This provided an opportunity for participants to see what they had said and to ensure they were happy with their representation.

3.2.2 The construction of the interview questions

I prepared an extensive bank of interview questions (see section 6.2.1) centered around the examination of themes arising from three main areas:

- The White Paper – Higher Education and Research Act (2017)
- The institution's own TEF submission documentation and response to its TEF award
- Literature from journals focused on the HERA plus trends within HE, including new public management and marketisation.

A rational approach was taken for the interview questions to be developed from themes arising from the literature review, which was a practical starting point 'as it provides the theoretical foundation' for the research (Reis and Judd, 2000: 291). Rowley (2012: 263) supports this by stating 'interview questions can be informed by practice or experience, or by theory,' and associated with research that is inductive in nature. Burgess (1985: 102) claims that interviews are 'conversations with a purpose', and this is my aim with this research. Levy (2014: 278) adds that people are conversational human creatures who 'live a dialogical life'. Interview structures and questions can be grouped as either structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Saunders *et al*, 2016; Grey, 2018).

The format of the interviews used in this research was semi-structured, however the interviews became more fluid over time. Mason (2002, cited in Holloway, 2014), comments that interview questions can never fully be unstructured, since a single question would often be required for the interview to commence. For the second set of interviews, the interviews questions were limited to just three and were derived from the participants' own transcript. I had pre-selected themes from the participants' initial interview that I found interesting or wanted them to expand upon.

3.2.3 The interview

Creswell (2003; 2007) discusses the stages that are required by the researcher in anticipation of undertaking research work, which includes preparation for the interview, constructing effective research questions and actual the implementation of the interviews. To prepare for the interviews, I carried out a pilot interview as advocated in many of the standard research books (Saunders *et al*, 2016; Grey, 2018). As anticipated, this was beneficial, since pilots 'assist in determining if there are flaws', as well aiding the 'refinement of research questions' (Turner *et al*, 2013: 757). The pilot interview arrangements highlighted something I was not anticipating, namely the seating location of the meeting between myself and my pilot participant. I conducted the pilot interview in my small office, where instinctively my participant sat in the visitor's seat, whilst I remained in my usual seat. The visitor's seat is a small pod located at the end of my desk. As a result, I felt I had power over my participant, I was in my office, at my desk and I was comfortable in my own space. This distracted me from the interview, and I felt uncomfortable, consequently I reflected upon how

this might be affecting the participant. Saunders *et al* (2016: 329) acknowledges that the 'appropriateness of location' needs to be considered above all for the interviewee's comfort. My concern was around the balance of power and how the dynamics of this would impact upon participants' responses.

After the first interviews had been scheduled, I gave participants the option of where they would like the interviews to be held, at a location of their preference and for their convenience. Most participants opted for the interview to be held in their office. If participants did not have a private office, I then offered my own private office or alternatively booked a meeting room for the interview.

Elwood and Martin (2000: 649) concur with my thoughts that 'choosing a location such as our university offices might constitute our own position as that of expert'. However, they note that the literature provides limited insight into the 'power and positionality' of the participant(s) in terms of ethical considerations (*ibid*). Gagnon *et al* (2014) emphasises that 'interview space and place whilst interviewing is one way to engage in reflexivity,' which has been helpful for my role within the research process. Conversely, Herzog (2005: 2629) states that the interview location is relevant to the 'social context of the study' and should be 'an integral part of the interpretation of the findings'. Barbour and Schostak (2012: 69, cited in Somekh and Lewin, 2012) discuss factors that lead to 'problematize interviews', citing several key concepts in relation to interviewing: power, social position, value, trust, meaning, interpretation and uncertainty. The reference to power is expanded upon as 'power structures that are the context to the exchange taking place between interviewer

and interviewee' (ibid). I was aware of these issues since the participants I was interviewing were in roles that could be considered elitist. I was interviewing people who were very senior to me and held a position of authority within the institution and this resulted in a shift of power. In comparison I was a subordinate, who was now interviewing them about a new, high profile legislative policy. Elements of the imposter syndrome set in. Therefore, to mitigate against these inequalities in power, it was crucial to proactively embed strategies, so that such inequalities would not adversely impact data quality, and so that good rapport would be established.

Bell *et al* (2014: 196) discuss how establishing rapport 'is often considered to be one of the most important skills for effective interviewing'. Gremler and Gwinner (2008) explore the notion that rapport is developed via an attentive interviewer, whereby the interviewer can make a connection with the interviewee. The issue around rapport and data quality is something that Bell *et al* (2014) says is contested. Since rapport is 'the foundation for effective interaction' (Abbe and Brandon, 2012: 237), then if this contributes to access and trust, I feel data quality will be enhanced by this. Since rapport is usually established within the first few seconds of interviewing (Lavrakas, 2008), I ensured that my first line of questioning centered on the participants themselves, asking them initially to talk about themselves; who they are, what they do, their career history, and proceeding to ask what they find most rewarding and the challenging aspects of their roles. Since establishing rapport is also a 'means of establishing a safe and comfortable environment for sharing the interviewee's personal experience and attitudes as they actually occurred' (DiCocco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006: 316), the incorporation of these questions, effectively

icebreakers, were an essential element of the interviews. As these progressed, I was able to draw upon the participants' responses in relation to what they found rewarding or challenging and embed these within the interview questions.

3.2.4 Data collection

Potential participants were identified for their suitability to take part in this study and contacted during July and August 2017. All participants were supplied with a participant information sheet which outlined the nature of the research. Interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder and subsequently transcribed. The first interviews ranged in length from 25 to 45 minutes, with an average length of 35 minutes.

Follow up interviews took place between June and July 2018, with participants contacted to arrange a suitable date and time for the interview. A week before the scheduled interview, participants received a transcript of their first interview. There were two reasons for this: firstly, to ensure that the transcripts were a true and accurate representation of their interview and secondly, to remind participants of the themes and topics discussed. During the interview's participants were supplied with a hard copy of their transcript and reference was made to aspects of the transcript, which formed the basis of the follow up interview questions. Interviews, as previously, were recorded on a digital voice recorder and transcribed. The second phase of interviews was shorter than the initial ones, lasting 7 to 25 minutes, with an average length of 15 minutes.

3.2.5 Transcription of interviews

Oliver *et al* (2005: 1273) state that 'Transcription is a pivotal aspect of qualitative inquiry', hence my data analysis effectively started upon transcribing it. Kvale (2007: 95) adds that 'researchers who transcribe their own interviews will learn much more about their own interviewing style', and 'started the meaning of what was said'. I transcribed my own data, usually within 48 hours of the interview having taken place. I made notes during each interview, so was able to visualize nonverbal features, gestures and reactions which were incorporated into the transcripts at relevant points. Bailey (2008: 127) emphasises that the 'meaning of such utterances are profoundly shaped in which something is said in addition to what is said'. As a result, there is greater insight into the interview exchange via the addition of non-verbal features. The transcripts word count in total across both sets of interviews was over 50,000 words. Sample transcripts can be found in within the appendices in chapter 6.

3.2.6 Analysing, ordering and making sense of participants data

Ordering and structuring transcripts that totalled over 50,000 words took much longer than anticipated, with the volume of data overwhelming on occasions. I tend to refer to models that I am familiar with using, hence I turned to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. This model effectively encompasses the following logical and condensed approach to thematic analysis, which can be seen in table 17:

Table 17: Six phases of thematic analysis

- Phase 1: familiarity with transcripts and data
- Phase 2: generating initial codes
- Phase 3: search for themes
- Phase 4: review themes
- Phase 5: define and name the themes
- Phase 6: produce the report

(Source: Braun and Clarke, 2006)

I have adopted and taught this approach for years hence the starting point is familiar. It is not as simplistic as the model implies; my own ordering and analysing of data involved some additional stages. In order to provide a depth of analysis I applied a content analysis approach to my data. Content analysis is described as ‘a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use’ (Krippendorff, 2014: 18). This would allow for ‘valid inferences from verbal, visual, or written data in order to describe and quantify specific phenomena’ (Downe-Wambolt, 1992: 314). This can be compared to Ryan and Bernard’s (2003) paper on techniques to identify themes as part of qualitative data.

MacLure (2013: 228) refers to the intensity that seems to emanate from data, a ‘glow’, and later to the ‘wonder’, with wonder being ‘untapped potential in qualitative data’. I was drawn to this articulation because of something that stood out in my data, encapsulating what I wanted to achieve amongst the more salient themes. During the transcription I had included non-verbal indicators, however, listening again to the audio recordings of the interviews and cross referencing remained a large part of the ordering process. Emerging themes were identified, and colour coded as I transferred this information into two grids, one for each group of participants where I was able to cross-reference themes against excerpts from

participants' transcripts (sample provided in appendices). This proved invaluable for condensing and ordering the sheer amount of data to commence the analysis process.

3.2.7 Analysing using Foucault's 'little toolboxes'

Chapter 2 introduced various concepts of power purported by Foucault, which provided the theoretical framework for this research. In terms of the thematic analysis, Foucault's notions of power were used as an analytical tool. Foucault himself described his work as 'little toolboxes' (Foucault, 1975, cited in Patton, 1979: 115), with each of his ideas, theories or even individual sentences that could be used like a hammer or screwdriver, to disrupt /challenge conventional wisdom, to experiment, to make something new, or to identify how or why something works. My personal interest in Foucault's notions of power stems back to my time as a student at University College London (UCL), where in the South Cloisters of the main building I encountered the waxy, mummified remains of Jeremy Bentham sat in a wooden box. Bentham's unusual request to bequest his body to remain 'on display', ended up at UCL, who in turn within the South Cloisters had displayed some posters of Bentham's work. I was fixated with Bentham's idea of the central watchtower within the panoptic prison, a simple idea to control prisoners' behaviours. This in turn led to wider reading on my part, eventually discovering Foucault's (1977: 1991a) ideas around disciplinary power and later governmentality. Foucault had taken Bentham's panoptic prison and used this to explain how society was controlled and regulated by the threat of possible surveillance, which in turn controlled individual

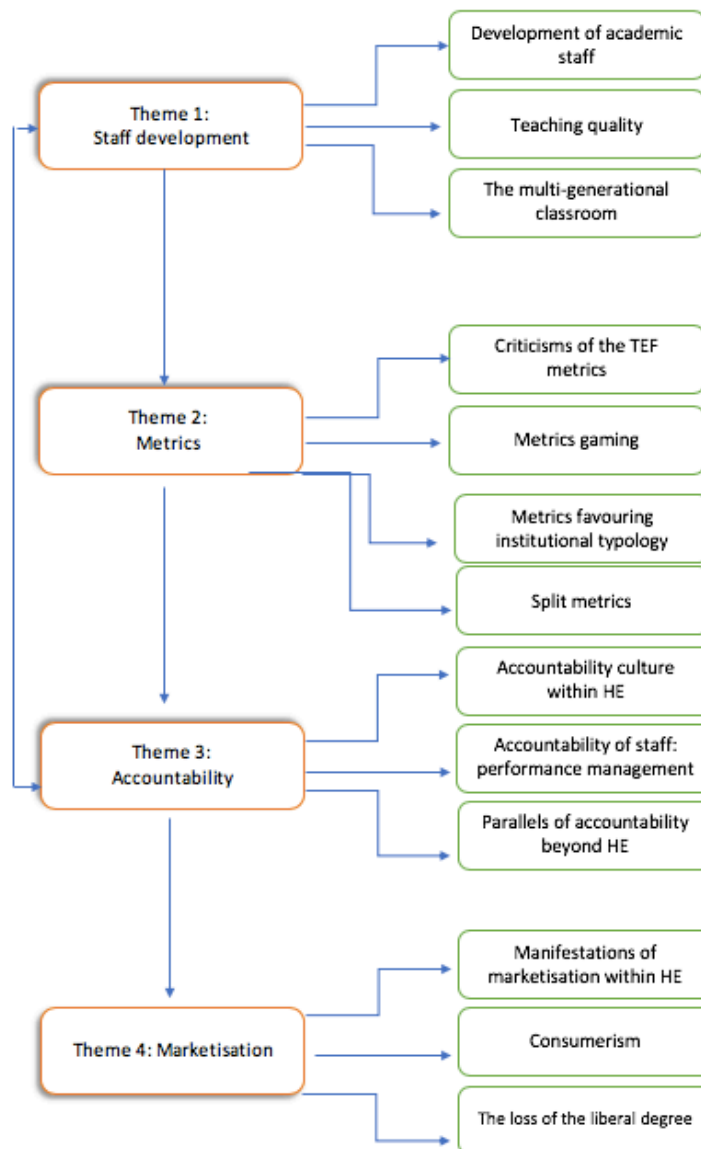
freedom. There was a simplicity to this explanation, something that was relatable. Here, one concept was overlaid by another, in order to express a meaning and this is something I wanted to replicate in my work.

I stress that Foucault's work is not validating this research, rather it is overlaid in relation to the findings. McLaren (2009: 2) wrote that it is 'problematic to construct an analytical framework that rests upon the works of Foucault alone', [...] yet 'the best we can do as researchers is to draw on his theories and use them however it best suits our own thematic research schema'. Foucault himself suggested that 'individuals use his ideas freely and draw on his books selectively' (Hope, 2015: 537), going back to the idea that his work is a 'little toolbox'. The notion that our behaviour alters when we think we are being observed, impacts our wider thinking and views. Using Foucault's ideas is a means to 'recognise that individual subjects operate simultaneously in two terrains – internal and external' (Evans, 2016: 1). Ultimately, I have overlaid Foucault's ideas on my findings, as a 'way of approaching a subject, rather than a rigid set of principles' (Hills, 2003: 6 cited in Hope, 2015: 537).

Chapter 4 The structure of the data analysis

The data analysis is presented as four sections within this chapter, covering the central themes of staff development, metrics, accountability and marketisation. The relationship between the central themes and sub themes can be seen in figure 3.

Figure 3: Key themes and sub themes emerging from data analysis



4.1 Data analysis: Staff development

This chapter will focus on one of the emerging themes arising from participants' interviews, which is staff development. This theme arose as part of discussions around the TEF, when exploring the nature of excellent teaching. Participants felt that in order to develop excellence in teaching, there needed to be a focus on staff development. This particular theme was mainly led by programme leaders (managed academics), rather than senior managers. This section will explore further the views of participants regarding the development of academic staff, teaching quality and teaching Millennials and Generation Z – the newest generation of students.

4.1.1 The development of academic staff

Participants who were programme leaders and were grouped as managed-academics, highlighted staff development as an area on which institutions should focus. Throughout the interviews all participants were asked about the cultural changes that may arise as a result of the TEF award. Conversations around teaching excellence resulted in staff development dominating participants' responses. Programme leaders in particular were extremely vocal about the lack of staff development. Some typical views are presented below:

"I know management systems are important, but that teaching aspect is very important, because that's the NSS, and your NSS is about how great is teaching predominately. So, yeah great, but put in some staff development" (P1).

"I think more investment in time and staff development and resource is what's needed. And, for it to really, really [sic] very much be geared towards that supporting the lecturers and giving them the resources they need for class contact time, whether that be planning, that

be additional resources, but I think that's where you would enhance excellence in learning"
(P2).

Both P1 and P2 are experienced academics and their views are similar; they are both emphasising the fact that metrics reflect teaching, but from their narratives both are indicating that there is a lack of staff development. P2 takes this further by promoting staff development as a means of investing and supporting lecturers. Thanh (2011) articulates the necessity of staff development, citing how it fails to keep up with institutional changes that are made in relation to market forces, resulting in weak teaching staff and therefore poor teaching quality. Bileviciute and Zeleniene (2013: 126) support this, citing that changes in HE can impact upon quality control, thus impacting on teaching, and that 'bureaucratic regulation does not ensure systematic quality control'. Stefani (2003) states that the focus of staff development is to improve lecturers' capabilities and therefore the practice of education. De Rijdt *et al* (2013: 48) expresses that the 'goal of staff development in HE is a change in teacher practices to positively influence student learning'. These notions of staff development being essential is expressed here by P5, speaking in the capacity of a senior manager, who has responsibilities for both staff line management and accountability for programme outcomes:

"I've sort of felt for a while that, for us to make that step change, which is what it would require isn't it, so it's this cultural change, it's this change in what we do. But actually, if we're really going to make a change, it's about moving, I believe, moving that middle block. But giving them new tools to use, supporting them while they go through a sea change themselves, moving from a certain type of style of teaching into a new style of teaching that suits this new age" (P5).

P5 acknowledges that a shift in culture, referred to as 'a sea change' in the dialogue, is needed in relation to supporting what is termed as 'that middle block'. The middle block consists of academic staff who are effectively 'plodding along' but not achieving high results and outcomes yet are described as very solid. P5 stresses that these academic staff can be developed and can progress to being better teachers.

The participants' views shown so far are conflicting. As managed academics both P1 and P2 agree over a lack of staff development, whereas P5 as an academic manager, acknowledges that staff need training to make them better teachers, yet it is clear that staff training initiatives are not in place.

Part of the challenge P5 discussed is that:

"We have no discussions space for teaching and a suggestion to address this is that I think it's about raising awareness, it's not necessarily about changing practices" (P5).

In other words, there is a need for forums or opportunities for exchanging best practice and information in a less formal manner. This notion is supported by Gerken *et al* (2016: 137), who state that 'HEI should foster the professional development of their faculty staff by stimulating exchange of information and using feedback with colleagues in a proactive manner'. Whilst this can be considered informal and is something that P5 is suggesting, other forms of effective strategies for staff development that are more formal include peer observation and mentoring (Hitch *et al*, 2018). However, P1 felt that previous institutional attempts in relation to staff development have often shown very little commitment. In the extract taken from P1's interview, this is expressed as 'half-hearted attempt' with genuine sorrow that there seems to be a lack of support for staff development. P1, who is a former

schoolteacher before moving to higher education, has consistently made comparisons between the school and university environments:

“I look at my job and I compare it to when I was teaching in other sectors, and I’ve taught in other sectors the focus has been on very much on teacher development, peer reviews, inset days, how do we improve learning. And in HE since I’ve been here, I can’t think of any, yeah, there’s been some half-hearted attempts at getting staff development in terms of teaching and learning, and they’ve tried, but they’ve fallen, they’ve fallen. Fell on the wayside. You know they disappear, never really got enough support, it was again reliant on buying in, it never got institutionally off the ground” (P1).

However, what is striking in this narrative is the repeated point that staff development does not have enough support or buy in. A similar view is taken by P2, another programme leader, who when asked if HE institutions invest in staff development, stated:

“Not at all, definitely no. It’s one of those fields really, where you’re considered to be an expert straightway as a new teacher. And to give an example, a specific example, you’re expected to supervise dissertations from day one, on the basis of the fact you’ve written a dissertation yourself. And that’s like saying you’re qualified to go and run a restaurant because you’ve eaten a meal in a restaurant. I think there’s not enough focus on staff development and what you tend to find is that people are actually, on occasions struggling. Struggling with trying to meet the demands, trying to understand the expectation and trying to deliver excellent teaching. But they haven’t been provided with the tools of the trade, the training and development to assist them to do that” (P2).

An alternative view and possible explanation is provided by another managed academic, P4, an experienced programme leader, who proposes that it may be difficult to engage with academics:

“I think that’s what management would hope [in relation to asking if there would be a cultural shift]. I think that academics are a bit like herding cats when you try and manage them, and I think we’re very independently minded” (P4).

P4’s comments here are interesting, since they imply a somewhat ‘them and us’ view, with management viewed with some hostility and academics referred to as being ‘independently minded’, suggesting concerns over academic autonomy. However, being autonomous and benefitting from staff development are not mutually exclusive. It is of note that P4 expresses concern over the TEF outcomes being used as a performance management tool further along in the interview.

P1 and P4 differ in their views; P1 wants more training and P4 is concerned about the pressure this may cause, referring to academic autonomy. In order to improve the TEF outcome in the long term, it may currently be seen as a performance management tool. This confirms P1’s view that staff development at the institution has been ‘half – hearted’ and that over time it has been eroded; hence it is embedded within the institution’s culture. When I followed up with P1, eight months after the release of the initial TEF award, I enquired what staff development had taken place at the institution. P1 stated:

“Sadly, for my own experience that hasn’t taken place. I think it’s very difficult when you’ve got such a huge organisation, with so many priorities and that was progression and employability, they were the two focus areas. So, I think if you’ve made progression and employability the two focus areas, then that’s going to happen. And so enviably, you know, staff development might take a back seat. To be honest with you, what I’ve observed it’s cultural, it’s an embedded cultural way of perceiving staff” (P1).

P1's comments indicate that it is not just a lack of staff development, but a perception of the institution's investment and commitment to that development, which needs addressing. In order for personal development to be effective and indeed to enhance it, the concept of lifelong learning must be recognised (Carnevale and Smith, 2013). Hence consistency and continuity in staff development is required. Gerken *et al* (2016: 136) support this, adding that professional development 'evolves over time and that much of that learning takes place in an informal way, in the daily work practice'. This informal learning, which may take the form of short conversations with colleagues, is recognised by P5:

"I think it's about raising awareness, it's not necessarily about changing practices, it's just about that sort of, I think just small changes can make a big difference" (P5).

The institution that P5 works for has undergone a period of restructuring and change. This coincided with the introduction of the HERA and the TEF. This period of change may have unsettled staff due to internal and external environments factors outside of their control. However, P5 asserts that raising the awareness of training and making small changes can contribute to a significant impact. Nonetheless, the role of strong leadership within higher education to foster a culture of self-development is widely acknowledged. Formal staff development mediums, such as attendance at workshops for instance, are often reliant on a 'clear connection between staff engagement and support from figures heads' that will result in a 'culture receptive to promoting good teaching' (Spowart *et al*, 2016: 214). Hennessy *et al* (2014: 240) advocate that inspiring teaching in higher education is a result of immersive staff development, and for continued success 'effective leadership and a team of

committed teaching staff are needed'. Therefore, the onus for successful staff development is the responsibility of both management and the academics themselves. P5 acknowledges this:

"So, all of the discussions that go on about flipping the classroom, all these things are brilliant, but if you're not aware of how they work, never had the chance to practice it, how can you go into a classroom and try it out - I think it's a really difficult thing to do" (P5).

Effective teachers work on a continuous cycle to reflect, review, action and improve teaching practice (Gibbs, 1988), hence excellent university teachers are reflective practitioners (Biggs, 2003). A non-formal approach to staff development, which is dependent on an organisational culture that promotes learning is needed in the first instance. At this point, I would like to return P4's comments, which I found interesting. P4's personal view was clear with a distinct onus on an academic's identity and autonomy, evident from these quotes:

"I think that academics are a bit like herding cats when you try and manage them, and I think we're very independently minded" (P4).

"I think it more from an issue of workload and more on a point of performance management. Academics have traditionally not been performance managed on teaching and it's then getting to a stage which would cause an awful lot of stress because your (pause) traditionally academics are not always employed on how well they teach, they're employed on how well they research" (P4).

I find a couple of things interesting here with P4's narrative. Firstly, the reference to performance management, which is explored further in Chapter 4.3 and therefore I will not address it here. Secondly, the differentiation between the roles of the academic and why they have been employed; to teach or to research. P4 argues thus:

“So, maybe moving forward it would be, how does HE appoint lecturers, but lecturers have traditionally been appointed one way and then to change the tables on a lecturer” (P4).

Quigley (2011: 21) describes ‘academic identity as a constantly shifting target, which differs for each individual academic’, and this shift in recent times may be attributed to the accountability culture within higher education. Deem and Brehony (2005) discuss the impact of new public management ideology within higher education and how this is manifested via academics’ workloads, thus affecting their identities. Bolden *et al* (2014: 755) asked academics the question ‘what is it like to be a citizen of an academic institution in contemporary Britain’; the answer demonstrated that academics have a ‘sense of ambiguity and ambivalence’ regarding their relationships with their universities. This has resulted in ‘fragmentation of academic identities’. P4 clearly feels conflict over their academic identity and how staff development relates to this. They were employed on how well they research and not how well they teach and now the TEF has moved that goalpost.

Quinn’s (2012: 69) work focused on exploring why there is ‘academic resistance to engaging in activities aimed at professionalising academic practice’. Quinn’s research in the form of four orders of discourse focused on four main reasons why academics may resist staff development focused on teaching. These are disciplinary discourse meaning that waste of time / research makes me a good teacher, student deficit discourse meaning that staff development not needed since students should come to university prepared, skills discourse which means teaching requires no training and finally discourse of performativity whereby staff development is only necessary for promotion. There are parallels between some of the views expressed by P4 and Quinn’s four orders of discourse. Whilst these do appear in isolated feedback from

other participants, I felt that they should be included within this discussion, since they not only demonstrate an alternative view but also touch upon the complexities of academic identities and thus pose further future research questions.

The Higher Education Policy Institute, HEPI, conducted research around the supporting statements made as part of the its TEF submissions. These show that institutions themselves place focus on staff development, for instance HEA fellowships awards are much higher in gold (76%) and silver (72%) providers than bronze (51%) providers (HEA, 2017), and gold providers were consistently higher than bronze providers in all fellowship awards types. The implication here is that gold and silver providers value teaching excellence and staff development and this is embedded in their organisational culture; or that gold and silver providers recruit more lecturers who are qualified. These are interesting findings, since research from Skelton (2004: 461) showed that teaching fellowship awards (UKPSF) were often considered a ‘poisoned chalice’, with holders feeling isolated or separated since they were mocked by colleagues. This is despite the UKPSF providing a description of the range of activities, knowledge, and values expected to be demonstrated by someone who teaches and supports learning, and despite the fact that the UKPSF ‘gives an external indication that a standard has been met’ (Turner *et al*, 2013: 6). The Browne review (2010: 48) also makes specific reference to academic staff training:

“Students will also expect that those teaching them have a minimum level of skill in teaching. Teaching in HE is diverse and a one size fits all ‘licence to teach’ is not appropriate. The HE Academy has developed a professional

standards framework, which can be used for accrediting individual institutions' own teaching development activity so that it meets a nationally recognised minimum standard. This allows institutions to design teaching development programmes for their staff, which make sense locally, yet meet nationally recognised standards".

Nonetheless, there is a correlation between the TEF award and staff HEA fellowships (HEA, 2017), and further, 'institutions with gold TEF awards are proportionately more likely to have bumper number of NTF's – National Teaching Fellows, compared to silver or bronze institutions' (Rolfe, 2017: online). In addition, an analysis of the TEF supplementary statement, found that institutions that focused on teaching quality demonstrated a culture of teaching and learning which was embedded within the institution. Institutions with this embedded focus on teaching were more likely to be gold-rated (44%) than bronze-rated (27%) (HEA, 2017).

4.1.2 Teaching quality

When discussing staff development as part of cultural changes that the TEF may bring to institutions, participants across all groups used the term 'quality' specifically in relation to teaching. Quality within teaching was something that participants felt was associated in the new TEF era. Typical comments included:

"It's about the market, I'm a bit sceptical about, how are you to know how that works, in practice. But, in terms of teaching quality I do get where that's coming from" (P1).

“Changes do need to be made to because there needs to be focus on quality teaching” (P2).

*“I do think that it does focus minds and hence focuses the quality of what we are doing”
(P5).*

“The TEF is even more removed from actually judging the quality of teaching, it’s looking at measures of different things that are, not necessarily about teaching quality” (P7).

There are many perspectives as to what teaching quality is. One view is that teaching quality is a range of skills and hence is ‘associated with credentialing, personal knowledge and expertise’ (Darling-Hammond, 2010 cited in Fitchett and Heafner (2018: 1). Hollins (2011: 395) explains that whilst teaching itself is a ‘complex and multidimensional process’, teaching quality occurs when ‘knowledge is applied in ways that provide equitable access and opportunities, that build upon and extend what learners know’. This can be extended to the design of an assignment, which can be a ‘measure of teaching quality’ (Joyce *et al*, 2018). Therefore, for teaching quality to be present requires a lecturer who is an expert in their area of practice, with the requisite knowledge, the ability to communicate this knowledge and finally to test this knowledge in their students, via a well-designed assessment. Teaching quality is measured and is referred to as ‘Student Evaluations of Teaching’ (SET), which is also known a course evaluation, internal student surveys, or the more formal National Student Survey (NSS). The measurement of teaching quality can result in improvements to teaching but is also used by university managers to make decisions on academics’ careers and future promotions (Ginns *et al*, 2017: 26).

Quality has been the focus on policy within higher education; as part of the EU educational policy 'state members are required to improve quality of their education and training through a process of setting targets' (European Commission, 2017: online; Keeling, 2006). The aim of the EU educational policy is to 'support national education systems and address common challenges' (EU Commission, no date: online), which facilitates the ease of study for students across currently 28, soon to be 27, member states. In the UK, the Browne review in 2010 explicitly indicated why quality in teaching, and hence staff qualifications and development were significant. Browne (2010: 47) stated that 'regulation of quality is central to the credibility of the higher education system'. Whilst the report's introduction on page 2 clearly states that 'competition generally raises quality', it was made explicit that this increased competition for students would necessitate that 'institutions will have stronger incentives to focus on improving teaching quality. If they are not able to attract enough students, their funding will decrease' (Browne, 2010: 48). This latter excerpt from the Browne review is direct and definite; make teaching innovative and engaging, otherwise there will be reductions in the number of students, and the associated funding. In the longer-term, no funding may be a threat to future employment. When Browne uses the word 'incentive' in this context 'institutions will have stronger incentives to focus on improving teaching quality', this does not necessarily imply a positive stimulus that will motivate academic staff to teach better. Conversely, it implies more of a threat; lack of quality within teaching, as Browne points out, will manifest itself in fewer students wanting to attend and therefore this is reflected in less funding for institutions. This is an extension of normalising judgment (Foucault, 1977). Browne has clearly stated that the expected

norm is that teaching quality should be as standard, and the use of the term 'incentive' should remind institutions of the rewards of funding and students. Power is manifested by simple surveillance in institutions via the observation of institutional teaching metrics and dataveillance, offering an insight into the institution's performance. The expected behaviour from lecturers is to deliver engaging teaching and any deviation from this should be rectified through supervision and staff training. However, as discussed previously, staff development is perceived to be an option rather than compulsory by the institution, resulting in a Catch 22⁷ situation.

I recall from my own experience when just after starting teaching, my programme delivered what the institution considered a poor NSS result, which impacted the overall departmental score. What followed was a close period of observation, which very much focused on alignment to the institutional benchmarks. This included supervision of the team via the implementation of training, which centred specifically on rules, procedures and an expectation of staff conduct, focused on the short rather than long term. The impact on the teaching team was mixed; there was compliance, illustrating the 'docile bodies' referred to by Foucault, alongside some resistance and eventually resulting in compliance. I learnt quickly about the very real pressure to conform, and equally not wanting to be part of a programme that stuck out for 'all the wrong reasons'. This was partly driven by how other colleagues would perceive me. It is important to note that Kinman (2016: 505) stated that 'the introduction of more judgemental performance management systems regarding the direction,

⁷ Catch 22 refers to a 'contradictory or self-defeating course of action'

quality and impact of teaching and research output' has impacted academics' mental health as well as job satisfaction.

From the excerpts quoted from the participants' transcripts, they are all aware of the need for quality in teaching and they acknowledge within the context of the discussion, that the TEF has focused on quality in teaching and in turn, the need for staff development. P7, a senior manager within teaching and learning, simplifies the need for staff development to deliver quality teaching, demonstrated by this excerpt:

"There are all sorts of things you can do from a regulatory point of view that may fix certain issues. I'd much rather say let's just make teaching really exciting and engaging so that students want to turn up and find every single session is engaging, exciting and interactive, rather than fiddling with the regulations" (P7).

P7 is referring to changes made within the institution, where student assessment regulations have changed. This relates to condoning students' grades between 30%-39% at levels 5 and 6, where previously this was only applicable at levels 3 and 4, meaning that more students pass and proceed, avoiding a re-sit. Quality teaching, and hence staff development to achieve this, puts the focus back on giving staff the tools to do their roles effectively, without creating a panoptic environment. Since the marketisation of higher education in the UK, the greatest impact is felt by these academics working in post-92 institutions (Taberner, 2018). As Skelton (2009: 107) states, working to improve or drive quality within teaching 'represents a potent force to drive us forward in our efforts to understand and improve what we do'.

4.1.3 The multi-generational classroom

Participants identified in their conversations that one of the major factors contributing to the need for staff development is that the student profile is now different from that of a student taught in HE 20 or 30 years previously. More students are engaging with HE than would have previously done so, due to widening participation. Further, students pay tuition fees, and this changes their identities; they may consider themselves as consumers as opposed to students or may be perceived as consumers by their lecturers. There also needs to be consideration towards the different generations that now attend HE Institutions, from baby boomers to Generation Z. This is the new age of the student: different backgrounds, different upbringings, varied social capital and multi-generational. Participants, as part of the discussion around staff development expressed that with the introduction of the TEF more explicit attention to teaching and consideration was needed for the new age of the student. This is reflected by participants' comments:

"We are very proud of widening participation and diversity in our student body, but that means these students don't have the support networks that traditional students would normally have" (P4).

"Moving from a certain type of style of teaching into a new style of teaching that suits this new age" (P5).

"It's much more skills focused, it's much more focused on meeting diverse needs and I think, it's very much, if we are doing it right our offer is very much about recognizing that students don't come with privilege" (P6).

Statistics from HESA (2018b: online), evidence the changing student profile over the last 6 years, with the following notable data, see in table 18:

Table 18: Changing student profile over the last 6 years

- Part – time student numbers have declined steadily since 2012/13
- Part – time students aged over 30 have increased in 2015/16 and 2016/17
- Full – time students aged 30 and over have increased in 2015/16 and 2016/17
- Students aged 24 and over have consistently increased since 2012/13
- Black and minority ethnic (BAME) student numbers have increased steadily since 2012/13
- 57% of all HE students and 63% of undergraduates are female.

(Source: HESA 2018b: online)

More full-time students, who are largely female, older and hence mature students, are more likely to be parents or carers. In addition, the data from participation neighbourhoods which reveals how likely a young person is to participate in HE based, on where they live, has shown an increase in young people attending HE from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR 3 / 4 regions) (HESA, 2018c). Hence, young people who would have not engaged in higher education ten or twenty years ago are now accepting offers and attending university. This changing student body is acknowledged by both sets of participants, and is highlighted by the following excerpts:

“And I think we have a real challenge with widening participation of taking students that wouldn't necessarily before had been to university. And bringing them on and then leaving with good honours is something to be really proud of” (P3).

“You know if we want our students to go and be job ready, well not job ready but be ready to go into the workplace, then I think that's the way our teaching has to go as well. It's about the soft skills, as well as the academic skills, but it's, you're almost going back to the old ethos that polytechnics or technical colleges - wasn't quite an apprenticeship, but wasn't totally about study, but was more to it” (P3).

“Very conscious of knowing students, who they are, knowing their characteristics, knowing their makeup, you know. I think one of the most significant things for us, other than aiming as a world-class professional university, we take at the moment 39% of our students from a widening participation background” (P6).

All participants are clearly aware that the students they are teaching now are not representative of the student ten or twenty years ago, and the typical classroom may contain students from different generational groups. The student population is grouped into generations, reflective of the generational period in which they were born and raised. This is reflected in their behaviour and characteristics. Millennials, for instance, were born between 1981 – 1996 and are now aged between 21 and 37 years old, with Generation ‘Z’ born between 1997 – 2012, who are currently aged between 7 and 22 (Barr, 2018). The contentious and derogatory term ‘snowflakes’ has been used to describe these generations who are considered to be less resilient and more easily offended than previous generations (Haslam-Ormerod, 2019). It is important to note that Millennials and Generation ‘Z’ were likely educated in schools that were built on a neoliberal ideology.

The Education Reform Act (1988) saw changes to schools, including parent choice, the creation of league tables, the creation of OFSTED and also the introduction of the national curriculum. These students are products of this schooling environment, in which they would have experienced a variety of different types of teaching. Each generation will have different expectations, reflective of their generational upbringing. For instance, Generation ‘Z’ is considered to be ‘technological savvy’, reflecting the growth of technology during the early 21st century (Barr, 2018). They

are also connected to their mobile 'phones and communicate via social media and gaming as standard' (Carter *et al*, 2016). They also perceive themselves to be global, visual and educated (Dimock, 2019). Looking at the current profile of students in HE within the UK, there are some one million students under the age of 21, from a total student population of 2.34 million (Universities UK, 2018e; House of Commons, 2018). More 18-year olds have applied to HE, despite their number declining in the general population (UCAS, 2018). As a result of an increase in Generation 'Z' students attending HE, academics need to 'address the diversity in generations' (Lowell and Morris, 2019: 78). This means considering the appropriate pedagogy to use.

Carter *et al*, (2016) recommend that when teaching Generation 'Z' students, there should be a focus on including the use of mobile 'phones social media and technology in lessons. Recommendations also include the learning environment, given that these students are less comfortable in a typical lecture theatre or seminar room, and more comfortable in less structured settings. Since the 'generational experiences affect the values, attitudes and learning preferences of each generation', HE needs to be 'aware of the demographic profile of their students', so as to provide equality in learning opportunities (Lowell and Morris, 2019: 78).

It is 'unrealistic for this generation of students to be taught the same way' as their incumbent lecturers stated Williams *et al*, (2016). As is evident from the excerpts, the participants in this study are generally aware of this, with P3 referring to the 'real challenge with widening participation' and P6 referring to being 'more focused on meeting diverse needs' and the use of the term 'privilege', all of which are indicative

of the diverse backgrounds of students today and reflecting their multi-generational differences. P1 sums this up as follows:

“And when you’re talking to the top 2% of the country, which obviously in the 1980’s, you were sat in front of highly intelligent and highly motivated, able to work independently, it didn’t matter really, you could sit and talk to them for 2 hours, and just show a few slides and be fine. Because they would go away, do the essay and be independent learners. When HE expanded massively, you had a profile of students who didn’t necessarily learn that way and you had to change the way you teach them to learn” (P1).

D’Andrea and Gosling (2005: 192) acknowledge that as a result of changes to the student body teachers in higher education need ‘to adapt and respond to widening access and greater student diversity by focusing on the academic development of students, rather than operating with a deficit model of student capabilities’. This highlights the need for a focus on teaching quality via tailored staff development. Research by Su and Wood (2012: 145) on what makes a good university lecturer found that students wanted lecturers demonstrating the following qualities:

- Lecturers have subject knowledge that is delivered with authority
- Willingness to help
- Inspirational teaching
- Speedy feedback (on assessments)
- Being humorous

Therefore, there are a couple of considerations to discuss here, the first being lecturer recruitment in relation to the first quality identified by Su and Wood, namely a lecturer’s subject knowledge. There is an assumption that lecturers are recruited on their academic background or practical experience, however, as P4 points out:

“Traditionally academics are not always employed on how well they teach, they’re employed on how well they research” (P4).

According to the white paper, the TEF will simply readdress the importance of good teaching (Department for Business Innovation and Skill, 2016). Nevertheless, this will affect lecturer recruitment, with groups of lecturers who either are good teachers and hence useful for contributing to TEF outcomes, versus those who will contribute to the REF. The distinction here is that the TEF is not based on individuals' contribution, but the REF is. The distinction between these lecturer roles is articulated by P3:

"I was really happy when I looked at the results [referring to TEF awards] and looked at some of the Russell group universities and my own personal experience of teaching, some of these are so bothered about their own research that they were absolutely crap teachers"
(P3).

Staff development can help with learning techniques, for instance the use of technologies and peer mentoring can all help develop staff and hence improve teaching quality. Standard regulations in relation to marking turnover periods already addresses the issue of speed of feedback and are used as a mechanism to control academics since they need to deliver marking within set periods. However, students also view 'willingness to help' and 'being humorous' as qualities that make the ideal university teacher. However, are these not personal traits, as opposed to skills that can be taught? A person is either able to be humorous or not. I have heard many times from colleagues who say 'I am not here to entertain students', or 'students like you, because you make them laugh, hence why you do well in surveys'. Whilst I can understand the resentment towards humour in the classroom, for me the rationale is more of pedagogy. I like to develop rapport in the classroom using humour, so that students are more at ease, creating a safe learning space. I see

myself as an actor here using humour so the students warm to me, although I appreciate this may not be intrinsic for all colleagues. Research from Wong and Chiu (2019: 227) showed that lecturers described teaching to be more like 'entertainment', with one lecturer reporting that 'to keep students entertained so you really need to be a kind of Instagram in front of them'.

'Willingness to help' depends on what is considered reasonable and within the scope of a lecturer and can be perceived differently by students. The willingness to help is subjective and may be dependent upon the lecturer's good will or it may be specified within an academic's contract. The willingness to help however is necessary for an effective student learning environment, with the opportunity for 'interaction' with lecturers and 'building relationships between teachers' seen as effective for student learning (Harrison and Risler, 2015). Since the Dearing Report (1997) defined students as consumers based on them paying tuition fees, the relationship between lecturers and students and between students and universities has changed. The ongoing marketization of higher education thus makes staff development and hence staff performance integral to maintaining rules of free competition and open markets.

P3 discusses this challenge:

"I also think there's an element of the customer attitude towards the students as well, as culturally our young people are changing and that's challenging. I think they expect to be spoon-fed more than they have ever done, and they expect to be directed to where they can find the information even! You know, I think there is an element of we are changing that way, in that we're spoon feeding our students more than we had ever before" (P3).

There is a sense of frustration in the way that P3 debates the changing student position, the use of the term 'spoon-feeding' indicating that students do not wish to take responsibility for their learning. In terms of how students would view this, Tomlinson's (2017: 50) study with UK undergraduates indicated that the vast majority of students rejected the 'consumer label'. However, Bunce *et al* (2017: 1958) who looked at the impact of marketisation found that 'higher consumer orientation was associated with lower academic performance'. Therefore, the more students viewed themselves as a consumer, the poorer were their own academic outcomes. However, students do want 'good quality teaching and a positive learning experience', which Tomlinson (2014) states are correlated with demonstrating value for money. Whilst P3 expressed frustration with the student as a consumer, P8, a senior manager for the university, acknowledged the new student position:

"And students now pay an awful lot of money and so I think that gives them certain consumer rights, I'm not snobbish about that. They do have more rights to expect more of us" (P8).

The 'willingness to help' is perceived very differently by P3, who is at the forefront of teaching, in contrast to P8 who as a senior manager will have responsibilities and accountabilities for the delivery of key metrics.

Linking this back to staff development, P9, who is a senior manager with faculty responsibility for student employability, had a very different view towards the consumer labelling of students and the aspect of avoiding demanding behaviour, or as P3 referred to it, as 'spoon-feeding'. P9 wanted, via their teaching to encourage students to think about their mind-sets and this was reflected in the teaching delivery, which P9 discusses here:

“I think that the issues you have mentioned in particular are associated with millennials’ mind-set, which has come about in all kinds of ways. I think all that universities can do is be that there is a need, the conscious that there is a need to teach, not just skills but mind-set. I think what you’ve talked about is very close to the idea of this session that I am putting together about learnt helplessness versus optimism. And I think, you know, right there (points to screen with PPT) is my contribution to start to change that. I don’t think that you can ever do enough, but you know, it’s an inspiring area to be teaching and included” (P9).

‘Learned helplessness commonly refers to a condition in which an organism be it animal or human, exhibits insufficient efforts to explore the environment’ (Wenzel, 2017), which is demonstrated by P3 earlier, via:

“they expect to be directed to where they can find the information even” (P3).

The notion of recognising this behaviour and using staff development to address it in teaching is an effective method for tackling this. It should be acknowledged that the typical HE student has been ‘schooled’ in a particular way prior to their entry into HE. Their behaviour and performance have been monitored and tracked, they have been datafied as a result of ‘schoolification’ (Bradbury, 2019: 7). As part of this, such students as pupils were taught in a particular way, in order to achieve specific outcomes. They are a product of being schooled and now expect a similar experience at HE. However, it is fair to acknowledge that students who view themselves as consumers tend to have poorer academic outcomes (Bunce *et al*, 2017). Staff development is a cost-effective solution to manage this, resulting in better overall outcomes.

4.1.4 Summary

This first theme, centring on staff development, encompasses three main elements: the development of academic staff, teaching quality and teaching the multi-generational classroom. Whilst providing distinct areas for discussions, they are also interconnected. The prominence of teaching, as a direct result of the TEF, has focused participants on considering their own staff development. There was a clear consensus that staff development was something that participants felt was not prioritised, with the commitment of institutions to staff development considered as half hearted. Developing staff was not perceived as a priority or as an investment, with programme leaders expressing that for successful teaching to happen, investment in staff training was required. Subsequently, the discussion broadened to highlight that the need for staff development was not only necessary in the new TEF era, but also essential to focus on teaching quality as well as teaching a new multi-generational range of students. The presence of the TEF has raised the question of the quality of teaching, which participants are keen to deliver on, thereby redirecting the onus back to the need for staff development. Yet staff development is also necessary to ensure that academics can meet the requirements of the diverse range of students. Browne (2010) made it clear that a focus on teaching quality was necessary to avoid the loss of funding and potential students. This in turn has guided the expected norms in relation to what quality is and the pressure to be a good teacher. However, the lack of institutional commitment to staff development resulted in a Catch 22 position, and a conflict of conditions. Disciplinary power is not

only being exerted by the government but also by the institution, yet there remains a discrepancy as to how staff are trained and supported.

4.2 Data analysis: Metrics

One of the emerging themes from the participants' interviews centred around the use of metrics. Output metrics, such as the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Destination of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE), are measured and contribute to rankings for university league tables. These metrics also act as key performance indicators of an institution's success; they are tracked, reviewed and discussed to demonstrate accountability, both within and outside the institution. Metrics now also contribute towards the overall outcome of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award. This chapter will explore participants' views on the metrics that contribute to the TEF; this includes criticism of metrics, metric 'gaming', metrics favouring particular institutions and finally split metrics.

4.2.1 Criticisms of the TEF metrics

A difference of opinion has emerged between participants with programme leaders who are managed-academics and more supportive of the TEF, than senior managers who are academic-managers. Participants expressed that the TEF is welcomed and valued, yet they raised concern over the use of metrics which contribute towards the TEF. This was articulated in interviews with comments such as:

"TEF is the right thing, at the right time" (P1)

"I don't think TEF is a generally a bad thing" (P3)

"TEF is a blunt tool, but TEF brings that feeling teaching and our procedures have something to say" (P4).

"[TEF is] potentially a good thing but imposed in the wrong way" (P9).

It is worth acknowledging that P1, P3 and P4 are at the forefront of teaching and are not active in research. For these participants the TEF may provide an acknowledgement of the importance of teaching, this is further evident in section 4.2.3, and in the same way the 'Research Excellence Framework (REF) seeks to measure the quality of research output' (Perkins, 2018: 2). One of the key objectives of the TEF is to recognise that 'the excellence of the teaching matches the excellence of research' (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2016: 5), therefore giving teaching the same platform for recognition as research. P4, a programme leader, acknowledges that:

"TEF brings that feeling teaching and our procedures have something to say" (P4).

These findings differ from recent research⁸ from O'Leary *et al* (2019: 4), which concluded that just one in ten participants viewed the TEF as favourable, while the majority view the TEF as an 'unpopular policy'. However, it is important to acknowledge that this study's sample is considerably smaller than O'Leary's and is focused on a single post-92 institution. This does not detract from the fact that for this study, participants held a favourable view of TEF, hence further research to build upon this study would be valuable for a more definitive conclusion. At the time of writing this thesis, there is limited research on the impact of the TEF from an institutional perspective, and the TEF and future research are likely to evolve over time.

⁸ This study was commissioned by University and College Union (UCU), with a sample size of 6,000 UCU members including staff and not just academics across the UK.

However, whilst programme leaders may view the TEF favourably, they expressed a lack of clarity over the components of the TEF and how this results in a particular award. For instance, P1 expressed:

"It's been awarded, its useful to know how it is broken down" (P1).

P2 added that awareness of how the TEF was constructed is:

"Virtually negligible (P2)".

This suggests a lack of institutional communication over the purpose of the TEF, its formation and why this institution was given a silver award. Individuals are unclear about these issues. Research from Massie (2018: 332) indicates that this is a common problem, since 'programme directors who are responsible for the delivery of academic programmes within HEIs' have received 'insufficient training in relation to TEF'. Massie's study concludes that 'an increase in training may have a beneficial outcome for a university's TEF results; (ibid). Once it has been explained how the TEF was composed and which metrics contribute towards this, typical reactions included:

"Metrics are not a good indicator of teaching quality" (P2).

"Metrics are not a reliable indicator of teaching" (P3).

These types of comments were consistent across all participants, regardless of the role they hold. P9 sums up this view by stating:

"I very strongly feel that metrics, metrics [sic] cannot represent excellent teaching. Because metrics are skewed by all kinds of factors" (P9).

Participants holding senior management roles, academic managers are concerned with what the TEF signified as well as its composition. P7, a senior manager responsible for teaching and learning, expresses that:

“TEF is even more removed from actually judging the quality of teaching” (P7).

This range of comments from participants concur that metrics used within the TEF are not necessarily representative of teaching which is examined in depth in the next section. Measuring metrics or other indicators of performance can also distort behaviour, resulting in measuring what needs to be measured (Lowe, 2013; Ingram *et al*, 2018). Skelton (2005: 4 cited in Gunn, 2018: 134) states that ‘teaching excellence is a contested, value-laden concept’, which means ‘different things in different disciplines and institutions’. For instance, when examining KIS data ‘classifications simply fail to provide useful information about courses that are technologically innovative, serving to normalise conventional class-based formats, irrespective of their pedagogic merit’ (Barefoot *et al*, 2016: 16). In other words, stripping teaching down to its core removes all the teaching innovation, good practice and pedagogical approaches that have taken place. Ultimately, quality of teaching is reduced to a single number, or a composite of very few numbers.

The Browne review (2010) first formally introduced the use of metrics as performance indicators to drive up quality, however the initial aim was to provide students with information in order for them to make an informed choice. Spence (2018: 1) describes the changing role of the university due to ‘metric fetishization’ on the part of institutions themselves. Metrics have been used in a variety of

different ways, with different methodological approaches; the compilation of university league tables provides a good demonstration. Three different league tables dominate the UK HE landscapes, these are; the Times Good University Guide, the Guardian University Guide and the Independent Complete University Guide.

Turnbull (2018: 9) highlights that 'each compiler has developed their own methodology' and therein lies a significant problem. The different weighting of metrics means that the same university can score 67th place in one league table, 93rd in another and 95th place in the third league table. This would not allow students to make an informed choice but rather, it would result in confusion. Whilst individual metrics in isolation may provide a snapshot of data, it is the complication and weighting of that data for like for like comparisons between institutions that is contentious (Barefoot *et al*, 2016). The TEF requires a range of metrics: NSS, DLHE, LEO and retention data in order to calculate the overall TEF award, see table 2.2 in Chapter 2 for full details. This is further supported by a 15-page institutional statement, which should contextualise and explain these metrics. Participants across both groups expressed concern over firstly the use of these metrics and secondly the use of the statement.

A focus on retention as one of the metrics that contributes to the TEF provoked the following reactions from participants:

"I don't even see progression as a teaching and learning problem" (P3).

P7 contributed to the discussion that retention leads to progression, explaining that:

“Progression is a very complex matter.... if there was a magic bullet for this, we’d have found it and used it a long time ago” (P7).

Student retention is a complex issue and as P7 describes there is no magic bullet to rectify it. Hamshire *et al* (2013) found that the reasons for students wanting to leave their course are wide and diverse, including issues with academic workload and poor academic performance, course related issues, as well as their own personal challenges. Some of these can be addressed by the institution, but not all. The White Paper refers to the inclusion of retention with the TEF, albeit melodramatically, as ‘thousands of life opportunities wasted of young dreams unfulfilled, all because of teaching that was not as good as it should have been’ (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2016: 46). It is clear that retention is seen by the government as a direct result of poor teaching. Hamshire *et al* (2019: 1) cites that the ‘early withdrawal of students....is an international concern and despite considerable investment, retention rates have remained stagnant’. However, research by Roberts (2018: 140) indicates that ‘student retention requires a sustained, deeply embedded commitment from all parts of the institution, placing student experience at the forefront of all activities in the student lifecycle’. Robert’s study concluded by emphasising that academic staff have a significant role to play in student retention, including not perceiving students as consumers, displaying a positive welcoming attitude to students, treating them as individuals and the holistic provision of services and support (ibid). A similar impact is found when examining NSS results; ‘student-staff ratio and student employability are strong influencers of

student satisfaction’, suggesting that there should be an ‘emphasis on student support, personal development and employability’ (Lenton, 2015: 118). These factors are viewed important by students and reflected in their scores.

The comparison of institutions in relation to their retention rates will always be an unequal playing field. Different institutions attract different types of student, who in turn will come from a diverse range of backgrounds. Widening participation initiatives have encouraged disadvantaged students to engage with HE. The evidence suggests that ‘where young people from disadvantaged groups have obtained the appropriate qualifications for these universities, they are still less likely to attend’ (Reay *et al*, 2010: 108). These students are more likely to attend newer institutions than elite institutions (ibid). P9 emphasises this by acknowledging that retention rates are a measure of reality, but also that:

“Retention rates I think, that’s a better metric, because that does at least measure reality and it also measures the degree to which universities are doing something about it. Once again though, hugely skewed by socio economic factors” (P9).

This has been identified and acknowledged within HERA (2017: 40), with the Bill clearly stating that the assessment process for the TEF ‘will explicitly take into account outcomes for disadvantaged groups’, with the role of institutions being to ‘promote social mobility’ all of which is information which institutions must publish. This is undoubtedly included to deter institutions from not accepting students from disadvantaged backgrounds, fearing their non-completion may impact upon future metrics. Whilst P3 may feel this is not a teaching issue, it is crucial to acknowledge that ‘improving student retention in higher education is perceived as vital to the

cost-effectiveness of educational systems' (Borgen and Borgen, 2016: 505). Whilst 'clear educational goals may influence student retention' (ibid), P7 points out that:

"I think it's incredibly complex [referring to retention] and you know, if there was a magic bullet for this, we'd have found it and used it long ago, but there's not. But it means that every single member of staff involved in delivery of programmes to students to be absolutely committed to that" (P7).

P7's views concur with Roberts' work (2018), when he stated that investment in resources is necessary from an institutional perspective, in order for academic staff to play a role in tackling retention. This complexity of retention is explained in detail by Yorke and Longden (2004: 104), who state that retention for level 4 students is impacted by 'flawed decisions made about their course, student experience of the programme and institution as well as a failure to cope with the programme'. In addition, 'events impact on students' lives outside the institution' (ibid), will also have an impact if a student stays or leaves. It is crucial to note that Yorke and Longden claim that the first three factors are within the scope of the institution, whilst the latter is not. This highlights that institutions should view retention as a teaching issue. The TEF needs to be more explicit in explaining why retention is a teaching issue, as do institutions themselves, and furthermore the complexity around retention needs to be recognised. Excellent teaching alone would not necessarily be a panacea to rectify the complexity of retention.

Participants felt very strongly that teaching metrics used for the TEF do not necessarily represent fully or present a complete picture of an institution.

P3 and P7 describe this thus:

“Not fully convinced about the way they went around it and if they got it right” (P3).

“Unfortunately, all of the measures which they have come up with so far, I think are proxy for teaching excellence” (P7).

When I first interviewed P9, the participant felt strongly that metrics cannot represent excellence in teaching. P9 explained that the student’s background will be reflected in their subsequent outcomes, and that:

“Students are from backgrounds that are far from affluent and economically successful. We know that affluent and economically successful backgrounds make young people more confident. So, if you asked for a satisfaction measure at a Russell group university, populated by economically successful students, you’re likely to get a much stronger perception of satisfaction at that stage from them, because less is at stake for them. So, that’s what I mean by metric are skewed” (P9).

It is documented that students attending a Russell group or elite institution achieve better outcomes than their peers in post-92 institutions. This impacts upon their DLHE and future LEO outcomes, to say nothing of better outcomes in general for students who come from more affluent backgrounds, are educated privately, and have studied high value degrees such as medicine and law (see MacMillan *et al*, 2015; de Vries, 2014; Bell and Brooks, 2018; Chevalier, 2011; Department of Education, 2018b).

Whilst not specifically a metric, participants did express observations regarding the supporting 15-page statement that accompanied the metrics, contributing overall to the TEF award. The aim of the 15-page statement was to contextualise the metrics

enhancing their meaning and values. P7 expressed concern over this, starting at their initial interview that:

“My concern with the TEF process that’s gone through, it’s premised on the hard metrics, then a contextualising statement, it’s your skill in writing that statement that seems to determine the outcome as much as anything else” (P7).

When, some seven months later, I interviewed P7 just after the TEF3 was announced, their stance towards the supporting statement was more pronounced.

P7 added that:

“I believe that there’s been gaming, and a lot of interesting work gone on how those providers statements are pulled together” (in relation to other institutions) (P7).

P8 explains that the TEF process has been a learning curve for the institution:

“We have a better understanding about how to write statements” (P8).

Research by HEPI has shown that institutions that were awarded gold included ‘buzz-words’ within their supporting statement. These include terms such as ‘creative’, ‘outstanding’, ‘personal’, and ‘connected curriculum’ (Beech, 2018d). With the newness of the TEF and a lack of guidance offered over the content of the supporting statements, there may have been an element of institutions now realising the level of impact made by the statements. Reflecting back on this, P8 asserted that:

“The impression we got was that it was on the metrics and that the narratives was really about contextualising. I think everyone has since seen then when they looked, the narrative was more important” (P8).

The conflict over the use of metrics can be summed up by P7 who states:

“I agree with the stated premise of the bill, but I don’t think the measures in place are the right thing” (P7).

Earlier in this chapter I described some favourable views towards the TEF from participants, however the underlying message is that the use of metrics may disadvantage the institution, since such metrics reduce teaching to a number, without taking into consideration the innovation, technology and pedagogy used to enhance teaching. Comparisons between institutions and individual metrics are subject to a great deal of variability and that variability is far more visible when those same metrics are merged to form a TEF award.

4.2.2 Metric gaming

The term ‘game’ appears in the White paper for HERA (2017), in the context of the government deterring institutions from not taking students from disadvantaged backgrounds. It reads as ‘providers might choose to reduce their intake from disadvantaged groups in order to ‘game’ the TEF (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2016: 49). Data from disadvantaged student groups is identified and broken down in the institutions split metrics data. This split metrics data allows comparisons of certain groups of students, such as BAME students, against a benchmark with other institutions, in order to view their outcomes. This results in either a positive or negative flag for the institution, depending on the extent to which it deviates from the benchmark. ‘Game’ in this context would be to avoid admitting disadvantaged student groups or limiting their admission into HE. Definitions of

‘gaming’ are often presented as ‘gaming the system’, which within performance management is seen to be about ‘bending the rules’, ‘rigging’ or ‘cheating’. The ‘fixing’ of metrics within a performance management system is referred to as ‘metric manipulation’ (Fisher and Downes, no date).

As P2 puts it:

“High on the agenda is NSS, DLHE and good honours. You don’t want to be in a big department and be standing out, performing badly” (P2).

P2 is a programme leader, and while their comments do not imply gaming, they do certainly indicate a pressure to achieve good outcomes for their programme. Participants expressed that they felt metrics were subject to gaming, but this was expressed with terms such as ‘manipulation’, and ‘bribery’. Both sets of participants articulated this in relation to NSS in particular, despite the fact that the NSS weighting for future TEF awards would be halved (Department for Education, 2017c). This was something of which participants were initially unaware. Participants displayed a real mistrust of the NSS, both in terms of what it represented and, in their view, its openness to exploitation.

Typical views included:

“You almost hear of bribery taking place for people doing their NSS, how real is that I don’t know” (P3)

“NSS can be manipulated, other metrics speak for themselves” (P2).

P4’s observation was that completion of the NSS was sensitive to external variables:

“I know there is an issue with NSS – how you feel on the day, at that time” (P4).

It is difficult to provide evidence supporting the claim that HE metrics have been manipulated to enhance an institution's position. However, it is possible to demonstrate that metrics are sensitive to a variety of influences, as I will demonstrate with supporting research. This sensitivity implies that metrics have the potential to be manipulated. For instance, the way students are feeling prior to completion of an evaluation makes a difference. Zumbach and Funke (2014: 1) noted that 'a positive mood leads to better ratings of different dimensions of lecture quality', in other words a positive mood is reflected in positive response when completing a course evaluation. It is not unusual for institutions to offer incentives to students for the completion of NSS and other course evaluations. These incentives may take the form of chocolates and cookies which are offered to students. If students were offered chocolate ahead of completing an evaluation, they gave more favourable feedback (Youmans *et al*, 2007). Replacing chocolate with cookies had the same outcome. In fact, students who were given cookies ahead of completing a course evaluation actually 'evaluated teachers significantly better than the control group' (Hessler *et al*, 2018: 1064). This is reflected in P2's view:

"We can partly control the NSS, there is a lot of pressure on completion – a lot of incentive to complete" (P2).

Butterfield (2018: online) describes 'the use of vouchers and prizes to encourage completion of the NSS: 'these efforts doubtless brighten the mood'. As P9 declared this is all about perception:

"Student satisfaction is not about reality, it's perception reality" (P9).

A wide variety of research has also shown that course evaluations such as the NSS are influenced by variables over which institutions have no control, such as gender and ethnicity. Within the TEF these would be the split metrics. Hatfield and Coyle (2013) observe that the 'likeability' of the lecturer, as well as the timing of the course evaluation impacts the outcome of course evaluations. Women and mature students are more likely to complete evaluations than men, so the programme profile and demographics are more influential than previously thought, given that some courses such as nursing attract more female students than male students. Female lecturers receive lower positive course evaluations than their male counterparts (Mengel *et al*, 2018). Mitchell and Martin (2018) were actually able to verify that male lecturers 'administering an identical online course as a female lecturer received higher scores in teaching evaluations'. Naturally, this has further implications for female lecturers in terms of their own career development and of course, their confidence in general. Worryingly, the ethnicity of the lecturer results in differences in completion rates of evaluations (Hatfield and Coyle, 2013). Black and Asian lecturers 'are evaluated more negatively than white [sic] in terms of overall quality' (Reid, 2010: 137). The same study highlighted that students perceived white lecturers to be the 'best instructors', with black and Asian lecturers deemed to be the 'worst instructors'. Basow *et al* (2013) also reports a similar bias in relation to lecturer ethnicity. A large-scale study by Boring *et al*⁹ (2016: online) concluded that 'student evaluations on teaching, are biased and unreliable'. The authors warn that since course evaluations are so sensitive, it 'is not possible to adjust for the bias, because it depends on so many

⁹ Boring *et al*'s (2016) study looked at 23,000 course evaluations, with 379 instructors / lecturers and 4,423 students across six mandatory first year units.

factors'. The study reported that course evaluations are incredibly sensitive to 'gender bias and grade expectations', as opposed to actually measuring the effectiveness of teaching. Brockx *et al* (2011: 289) refer to this as a 'biasing factor'. Course evaluations that score highly correspond with a 'positive significant relationship between course grades, class attendance and the examination periods in which students receive their highest course grades'.

I do have a particular perspective here as a female BAME lecturer myself, I should score extremely poorly on student evaluations, but I can honestly say that this has not been my experience in the nine years I have been teaching. I have always exceeded the institution's benchmark for student evaluations. So, am I an outstanding lecturer? I try my best, but the reality is that over the years I have addressed in my current teaching all of the potential issues that have come to light. Around assessment time I have responded to emails late in the day, at weekends, and via Twitter, offering extended assessment workshops scheduled outside of the timetable. All of this is additional and outside the scope of my paid role, yet there was an internal - normalising and cultural pressure to deliver this, and once done, there is a vicious circle that we are caught in and repeat. It then becomes the new norm. I have sometimes felt I am at a disadvantage, so I try and remedy this by making myself more accessible. But, by being too helpful and too accessible, I am concerned that I am not helping my students to fully develop as independent learners.

Something that P3 has reflected upon is:

"I do wonder if the NSS have had an impact upon the grades we award and how we mark"
(P3).

Grade inflation is an issue that has caught the attention of the regulator, the Office for Students (OfS). Students with grades below CCD upon admission to HE were awarded a first-class degree, constituting 17% in total, with a quarter of all students graduating with a first (HEFCE, 2018b; Office for Students, 2018c). The use of metrics, and the NSS in particular, is seen as 'creating a customer is always right culture within academia' (Butterfield, 2018: online). Giving students what they want, so that they write what we want on course evaluations, is precisely the 'metric fetishization' described by Spence (2018: 1). There appears to be a consensus that metrics do play a role, initially at least, when it comes to raising standards. P6 commented that:

"I think they can help you impose minimum thresholds. Raise the bar and achieve minimum threshold standards. You tend to then see people talk about gaming. Gaming the metrics. At that point they become less useful, from the bottom of the pile they help" (P6).

This is mirrored by P8, who stated:

"I don't think it always necessarily always gaming. I mean I think if everybody improves, there comes a point where you're on a very, very narrow margin. So, if you think about NSS you start to look at clustering" (P8).

Clustering in this context is used by P8 to describe the situation when institutions all have a similar NSS score. They are grouped, or clustered together in the same band. I asked P8 to expand upon this when I interviewed them several months later, and they added that:

“I wouldn’t say it was gaming because that implies a certain dishonesty, I would say if we all improve, what you get is clustering. And it becomes at that level a bit pointless” (P8).

P7 felt that gaming was not restricted to metrics alone, but to the TEF supporting statement, adding:

“I also believe that there’s been gaming, and a lot of interesting work gone on around how those providers’ statements, supporting statements are pulled together” (P7).

Whilst metrics have been instrumental in raising standards, once raised, then what roles do metrics then play? It would be necessary for institutions to continue to develop and improve further, monitor the sustainability of improvements and crucially to address new areas for improvement. Cheng and Marsh (2010: 693) explain that ‘NSS responses provide a limited basis for discriminating amongst universities and courses’, however, ‘reliable and stable difference between universities provide useful information for benchmarking universities, self-improvement, and informing student choice’. Therefore, when clustering does occur this is an indication that universities have maintained their standards.

However, metrics contribute to key student-centred data, such as KIS, Unistats and now the TEF, but there comes a point where there is little to distinguish between institutions. This may be an issue for rankings but equally there may be little value for students as part of their decision-making process.

Whether pro-active gaming occurs or not within institutions, what can be demonstrated is that metrics are sensitive to a whole range of external variables. This sensitivity alone makes metrics unstable and open to potential gaming, whether intentional or otherwise. Further, when looking at course evaluations globally, a

Canadian university has now said it will ‘move away from using student evaluations of teaching to measure lecturers’ suitability for promotion’ (Bothwell, 2018d: online). Clearly, they are not perceived to be accurate.

4.2.3 Metrics favouring institutional typology

Participants made comparisons between their own post-92 institution and Russell group institutions of their own volition. The line of questioning did not focus or mention Russell group institutions; therefore, it was notable that they wanted to discuss Russell group institutions in relation to the TEF. Comments centred on how the TEF would favour Russell group institutions, as opposed to post-92 institutions (all participants are from a post-92 institution themselves). The NSS, again proved to be polarising for participants. Many participants felt that the decision to half the NSS weighting for TEF3 (Department for Education, 2017c), was in fact to protect Russell group institutions TEF outcomes. P7 was very vocal in their concern over the reduction in NSS weighting, expressing this as:

“In my more cynical moods, I suspect that TEF will evolve to favour Russell groups” (P7).

“The reduction in the weighting of the NSS, the inclusion in absolute metrics as opposed to benchmarks, again, will favour certain types of institutions” (P7).

P6 and P8’s reaction to the halving of NSS, was simply:

“Privilege will always protect itself” (P6).

“Not so much reducing the NSS advantages the Russell group, but moving to DLHE probably advantages the Russell group. I think it’s a reaction in part of the student boycott” (P8).

Of all the TEF metrics the NSS is the one that has evoked most reaction from participants. It is the one metric that all participants have something to say about, and the one that almost induced an emotional response. As a former programme leader, I have empathy with this. I understand the pressures of trying to deliver good outcomes for the NSS, when at the same time there is so much out of your control, yet you feel responsible for. There is an irony in P8's comments about NSS halving as a result of the NSS boycott; indeed the 'wreck the TEF' campaign led by student unions impacted on 12 institutions, whose NSS results were void in 2017. All affected institutions were Russell group institutions (Grove, 2017). The NSS is therefore an 'unstable data source' (Shah, 2018: online) and with enough influence, student unions were able to sway the outcome. As previously mentioned, participants felt that metrics were susceptible to gaming. Research by Burgess *et al* (2018) examined the NSS over a ten-year period. They report that the 'NSS remained generally stable' and hence was a tool to distinguish between institutions over the decade. The increase in student fees in 2012 had little impact on the NSS, negative or positive, and over the 10 years student satisfaction 'steadily improved'. Additionally, work by Nurunnabi and Abdelhadi (2019: 76) examined student satisfaction, comparing 19 Russell group institutions against 102 non-Russell group institutions. They concluded that there was 'no statistically significant difference in student satisfaction rating between Russell group and non-Russell group'. However, research discussed earlier clearly shows that course evaluations are sensitive to a variety of external variables. Therefore, it is reasonable for participants to feel that there is a TEF bias towards Russell group institutions. The NSS weighting remains a significant component across all three league tables (Turnbull, 2018). The decision to halve the NSS weighting for

subsequent TEF awards is not in line with league tables and may be linked to a previously successful boycott. Whereas, when considering DLHE outcomes, which P8 feels would favour Russell group institutions, the evidence, as discussed previously does support this. It is well documented that students attending elite institutions have financially better outcomes than other students. This is partially because these institutions attract students from affluent backgrounds, and from high quintile areas, and their social capital (Macmillan, *et al* 2015). This is reflected in this statement from P8, who discusses the influence carried by social capital:

“Judging degree courses entirely on, I mean...what are you going to find out if you go to Oxford, Cambridge or the LSE and study economics, you’ll make a lot of money. They’re such amazing courses, with fantastic teachers, of course that’s not why. It’s social capital, the kind of people that go there, it’s about the networks, it’s about so many things that are going on. So, to judge universities’ quality of teaching on that sort of metric is nonsensical”
(P8).

It may be that Russell Group institutions are simply perceived as competition and described by participants as ‘them’ (Russell Group) and ‘us’ (our post-92 institution). Participants who are programme leaders demonstrated a sense of pride with their institution’s own silver TEF award, in particular when learning of Russell group institutions that held the same silver award or even those with bronze awards. Participants’ comments were almost mocking of the Russell group institutions’ TEF awards, with a sense of validation that their institutions are just as good as the Russell group. Participants expressed this as:

“I was almost laughing at some of the results. The Russell group universities were almost guaranteed that they were going to get a gold and they didn’t. So, their noses have been rubbed in a little bit” (P3).

“Some of the more elitist universities may feel that they don’t need to [focus on TEF]” (P2).

“We produce graduates that are ready to go into the workplace. Whereas the Russell group, if you’re doing geography, you then have to acquire other skills and further knowledge” (P1).

4.2.4 Split metrics

As part of his pivotal government review into HE, Robbins commissioned research and by appointing a statistician to head the research team, at the time of publication Robbins had ‘five volumes of statistical evidence’ to support the review (Barr, 2014; Robbins Review, 1963). This was described as the ‘first serious large-scale study of higher education’ in the UK (Williams, 2014: 211), which was responsible for developing HE as a ‘recognised field of academic study’. Formal teaching metrics appeared in schools in the 1980’s with the first university league tables starting in 1993. A recommendation of the Browne review (2010) was the use of teaching metrics for students’ use in order for them to make decisions about HE, as well as their use as a performance management tool. Participants felt that the assembling of the TEF, despite using familiar metrics, was to present data in a different way. This was expressed by participants who stated:

“They are a starting point [in relation to TEF]” (P1).

“TEF has certainly shone a light on teaching standards” (P5).

“The use of frameworks to raise standards” (P6).

This was best articulated by P8, who identified how the TEF split metrics data has made the institution look at their data in a different way. This was expressed by P8 as:

“One of the useful things about TEF is a lot of data about things we should be concerned about. So BAME progression and outcomes particularly employability, are not good. We knew that kind of before, but we really know it much more now” (P8).

I followed up with P8 some months later and asked if this had helped to raise standards. P8 responded thus:

“It’s putting a spotlight on something that people knew were problems, but now they’ve done a lot more digging about it because it’s feeding into their overall statistics. I do think it will be helpful in that way. Yes.” (P8).

P5 held a similar view, adding that:

“It shines a light on all those individual metrics, okay, which of these can we do something about” (P5).

This may mean that the TEF has ‘re-focused’ and ‘put a spotlight’ on the raw component data, to draw out important issues. Within this chapter I have used the term ‘metric fetishization’ (see Spence, 2018: 1). The term concisely expresses institutions’ obsessions with metrics, as a side effect of the accountability culture that exists within HE. Institutions have become focused on delivering metrics to the extent that the meaning of those metrics and what they represent has been lost. Consequently, whilst metrics may be showing superficially that an institution is achieving certain targets, small issues or points of concern may be lost, for instance an institution may have a retention of 90%, but split metrics may reveal that it is reduced to 60% for BAME students. Referring to Ingram *et al*, (2018: 546) ‘what gets measured, gets done’; split metrics have identified an area of concern that is now a target for the institution to improve. This was not something that was

consistently reported previously. Part of the issue with measuring metrics, upon which outcomes-based performance management (OBPM) is based, is that data are simplified. As a result of ‘the consequence of such simplification’ (Lowe and Wilson, 2017: 1) metrics that are considered to have value, for example due to governmental monitoring or publicly available league tables, are considered priorities for actions. Thus, the TEF has ref-focused that data and influenced institutional decision-making.

Re-examining P8’s comment, DLHE figures may be generally achieving the desired benchmark, however drilling down to its individual parts it appears that BAME students are way off this benchmark. Nevertheless, compiling the TEF data has brought this to the attention of institutions. This also supports the notion that metrics do have the potential to ‘raise standards’, albeit debatable exactly what the standards are, in this case by highlighting an obvious issue with underperforming (perhaps under-supported and under-investigated) student typologies that has previously been overlooked.

4.2.5 Summary

The use of metrics and participants’ reactions to them in relation to the TEF proved incredibly controversial and contentious for participants. Discussion from programme leaders (managed academics), who in general were welcoming towards the TEF as a recognition of teaching. These participants placed value on the TEF for finally acknowledging teaching, and not only for teaching to be seen as a poor relation to research. However, participants expressed concern that metrics which

contribute towards the TEF actually favour Russell group institutions, and there is some evidence to support these views. The most obvious is the halving of the NSS weighting which is odd when considering their use in league tables in light of the student boycotts that disrupted the NSS for Russell group institutions. However, evidence suggests that metrics are sensitive to a variety of different factors, such as the differences due to student typologies and the impact of incentivisation approaches e.g. free chocolates and cookies. The sensitivity of metrics does allow for their manipulation, intentional or otherwise. There are also output metrics such as the DLHE, that contribute towards the TEF award, but institutions have little control over and may be less likely to be unduly influenced. Metrics such as DHLE are known to favour the Russell groups more than the post-92 institutions. The Russell groups attracted wealthier, more advantaged students, who upon graduation have better overall outcomes.

I have used the term 'metric fetishization', to describe institutions' obsession with metrics in the accountability culture in which they now exist. Shah (2018: online) uses the term 'metric fixation', the context of the meaning is unaltered. Shah explains why the TEF is deeply flawed and makes an analogy with other public sector bodies in terms of how they have met their accountability. Examples include NHS waiting times being under recorded and schools focusing on D grade students in order to push them up to a C grade. This is grade 4 under the new system. Grades A-C for GCSEs contribute towards school league tables, bringing quick wins, although the morality of not focusing on all students regardless of their grades needs to be considered. This will be explored further in chapter 4.3.

Metrics are a source of valuable data which serve a variety of functions. Regardless of how academics view and use metrics, and how deeply metric fetishization reaches within universities, faculties and departments, it is clear that institutions are under surveillance at national and international scales through output metrics. Dataveillance through the NSS, the DLHE and other data allows governments and stakeholders to direct a panoptic gaze over an institution's management. Metrics, whilst publicly available and instantly accessible, represent a form of hierarchical observation (Foucault, 1977). The pressure of the panoptic gaze results in the metric fetishization by institutions and the pressure to deliver and deliver well. This necessitates significant levels of self-regulation in order to ensure the best possible outcome in the competitive HE environment.

4.3 Data analysis: Accountability

As part of the interview discussions, participants referred to accountability within the context of HE, both from an institutional and personal perspective. This was raised by all participants but was mentioned more frequently by those who held management positions, known as academic managers. These particular participants held roles with responsibilities that focused on metrics within their departments. This chapter will discuss participants' positions on the accountability culture within HE, performance management and the comparison of accountability beyond HE.

4.3.1 Accountability culture within HE

Discussions with participants around the TEF led to discussions towards accountability within HE, which was driven by the participants themselves. Academic managers, who as part of their daily roles managed metrics such as those associated with the NSS, were more vocal about the discussion around accountability. Participants perceived accountability in terms of the regulation of HE, with metrics as the tool to accomplish this. They conveyed that the introduction of the TEF was effectively a tool that measured an institution's accountability, which they expressed with the use of terminology such as 'market force', 'market confidence', 'market choice' and 'audit culture'. Some typical comments from participants included:

"In order to give market confidence, I suppose have to show that there's an element of regulation" (P6).

P9, viewed accountability as changes led by the government for financial gains:

*“I think that the political push for the role of universities pretty much is an economic one”
(P9).*

Accountability, particularly within public sector organisations, was sharpened during the 1980s alongside the rise of neoliberal inspired policies introduced by the Thatcher and Reagan administrations (see Chapter 2). Public sector accountability, in the form of New Public Management (NPM), was seen as a ‘move away from state bureaucracy towards efficient of public services’ (Lowe and Wilson, 2017: 2). The increase in the accountability culture within HE has been attributed to a range of factors, such as the increased cost of HE, issues with retention, and employers citing a lack of work-ready graduates (Leveille, 2006). In the last couple of decades, a global recession, government-led austerity, and pressure on public services have led to ‘skepticism’, with society debating the real value of a university education. This ‘climate of cuts’ described by Wimbush (2011: 211) and termed NPM, and later termed managerialism, is seen as an ‘approach to manage public services that focuses on performance improvement’ (ibid). This contributed to a ‘business model’ adopted within HE based on the principles of NPM, consisting of ‘markets, managers and measurement’ (Lowe and Wilson, 2017: 2), with institutions increasingly focused on outputs. Such outputs include student progression, student satisfaction, graduate outcomes and destinations, all of which contribute towards the TEF award, which itself is another output.

Participants were aware of the accountability within their institutions and the wider implications of its meaning, including an acceptance of the audit culture. This was expressed with statements including:

“I think it’s the manifestation of the government wanting to be ever more closely involved in the business of universities. I don’t think it’s an assault on academic freedom, but I think it’s that sort of creep of the accountability culture, the audit culture hitting universities several years after its hit schools and colleges for example” (P7).

“I suppose in order to give a market confidence I suppose you have to show that there’s an element of regulation, don’t you? If you’re the government and your ideology is around markets allocating resources, then you need to give those markets a tool and I think this is just a tool to give those markets. That’s its primary concern, that this has been brought in by a right-wing government, this is their ideology” (P6).

“Universities are being held more accountable. Ideologies drive behind it is about universities being more open and accountable as public bodies. And some of that may be useful, some of it will start to trend on university autonomy and academic freedom which will start to get worrying. So, it’s a double-edged sword, really” (P8).

Participants P5, P6, P7, P8 and P9 are all academic managers; all held senior management roles with responsibility for delivering various HE metrics for the institution. They all acknowledged by their statements the evidence of accountability, with a slight shift in perspective for each. P6 accepted that accountability meant regulations for HE, whilst P7 and P8 were concerned that the accountability culture within HE could impact on ‘academic freedom’, a term they both used. Orr (2019: 5) acknowledges that academic freedom is under assault ‘largely as a consequence of the increasing corporatization [sic] of higher education’. This is further discussed in section 4.3.2, when performance management is explored. P5, highlighted that degree programmes needed to reflect market forces, as opposed to those that the institution may have found interesting. P5 stated:

“Because of the market forces now because students are paying money, we've got employers that have skills gaps that they would like filled. I think we serve a master to those things, in the sense that we just don't want to create degree programmes we find interesting” (P5).

Personally, I have felt that as a programme leader I was responsible for ensuring metrics targets, set for my programme were achieved. One targeted activity was to ensure that students were aware of the annual NSS, so they would ideally complete it. Another was to ensure that we stayed in touch with student's post-graduation, so that it would be easier to track employment for DLHE completion. The programmes team also worked hard to ensure that we delivered excellent teaching, so we would meet our targets for student satisfaction. In addition, we provided support so that we retained students and so that they progressed to the next level of study, at all times building on opportunities to enhance employability and industry skills. These outcomes comprised our faculty key performance indicators (KPIs) and we were accountable for them. However, I implore that the accountability I have for my students, both as a lecturer and as a programme leader, is more profound than these simple measures. This will be explored further in this chapter.

Wimbush (2010: 211) outlines several reasons why the accountability for the public management of services is perceived to be attractive. There is an obvious relationship between public management and 'performance improvement', with a focus on 'public value management'. The primary regulatory objectives of the Office for Students (2018h: 9) include 'value for money' in objective 4. HE participation rates have increased steadily since Robbins (1963) expanded HE. The Robbins Principle asserted that HE was for all that had the ability and capacity to undertake a degree.

In the interest of student choice, Browne (2010) advised institutions that their core outputs, such as student satisfaction and employment, were to be presented for transparency. However, the accountability of HE is widely accepted as being in a 'mess', and that 'better regulation of HE is such an important issue' but bound by successive governments' red tape and other agendas (Hillman, 2015: 32). The language of public accountability has also changed over the years; initially the term 'New Public Management' (NPM), reflected the impact of 'neoliberal discourse' into policy (Marginson, 2013: 354). NPM is directly underpinned by neoliberal ideology. Browne's (2010) transparency of institutions outputs led the way forward for a new term, managerialism, which saw the introduction of professional managers. Managerialism meant that institutions adopted a new 'business-like' model with the inclusion of 'private sector' practices and 'quantification of outputs, represented by performance indicators' (Shepherd, 2018: 1669), with managers playing an important role. O'Leary *et al* (2019) has recently highlighted that 'TEF had created another layer of administrative bureaucracy'. P7 reflects upon this, highlighting that the introduction of the TEF has seen an increase in certain job roles:

"A while back I went to a meeting and everyone agreed that there had been an investment in staffing around the TEF. But the majority of that investment was around people who were doing strategic analysis information, data crunching and lots of roles were to do with managing TEF, rather than jobs to do with teaching and therefore had a direct impact on the things that were fed into TEF. So, it seemed to me that there was a consensus around a lot of investment in jobs and managing the TEF, rather than managing the things that feed into the TEF outcomes" (P7).

These views are supported by evidence. For example, in order to demonstrate accountability, it is typical for organisations within the public sector to 'employ

people with data processing skills', rather than relevant skills in line with the ethos of the organisation (Soss *et al*, 2011: 221, cited in Lowe and Wilson, 2017: 7). Roles related to analysing TEF data have increased since the introduction of the TEF, while at the same time academic staff remain concerned over the casualisation of teaching contracts. Research commissioned by the teaching union UCU suggested that 'half the UK's higher education staff are not on secure long-term contracts' (Lewis, 2018: online) and hence this contributes towards uncertainty and stress. New research from HESA about staff at UK universities confirms that a quarter (23%) of academic staff with atypical contracts¹⁰ are on zero hours contracts (HESA, 2019; HEPI, 2019; UCU, no date). Therefore, resources are diverted to the interpretation and presentation of the TEF data, as opposed to investing in excellent teaching. P7 summed this up by saying '*rather than managing the things that feed into the TEF outcomes*' by which they refer to the teaching itself. The paradox is that the TEF is meant to encourage institutions to focus their energy and resources towards developing teaching and learning. Yet resources are being directed towards improving the data, rather than improving the quality of teaching, suggesting that, ultimately, the quality of teaching will be reduced.

The term 'managerialism' has now evolved to encompass a range of terminologies in use, including 'results-based management', which is often used more internationally

¹⁰ Atypical contracts are for fewer than four consecutive weeks, one-off events, short-term tasks involve working away from the supervision of the normal work provider or work involving a high degree of flexibility often in a contract to work as-and-when required.

than within the UK); 'outcomes-based accountability', 'payment by results', 'outcomes-based evaluations', 'outcomes-based management', 'management by results', and the more commonly used 'outcome-based performance management' (OBPM; see Wimbush, 2011; Lowe, 2013; Lowe and Wilson 2017; Schalock, 2001). OBPM is considered to be an umbrella term 'for using outcomes as a way of making judgements about performance and effectiveness of social policy interventions' (Lowe and Wilson, 2017: 3).

All these terms share a common basis characterised by the audit culture within HE and management. Performance data contributes towards the creation of league tables (MacRury, 2007) and now the TEF. Lowe (2013: 213) argues that the use of 'outcomes to measure effectiveness of social policy is flawed'. Lowe's argument is that organisations do not have full control over outcomes, since not all information is measured. This is due to a 'simplification of OBPM and this does not tie in with the complexities of life' (Lowe and Wilson, 2017: 23). The measurement of OBPM 'distorts the behaviour of frontline staff to the detriment of the people they are supposed to serve' (Lowe, 2013: 215). P2, a programme leader, sums up the reality of OBPM, reflecting what Lowe has articulated:

"I Just think the whole field of higher education, things [sic] are under more and more measurement, scrutiny and it takes people away from doing the core responsible job of actually delivering excellent teaching to their students, and spending time with their students" (P2).

In order to deliver an outcome time has been diverted away from the student and from teaching, in order to ensure those boxes are ticked. Bevan and Hood (2006)

suggest that accountability measures, such as OBPM, 'distort and undermine the practices of social intervention, this distraction is often called gaming'. P2 is so absorbed with compliance for their programme metrics, that they have had less time to spend with their students. Lowe and Wilson (2017: 23) refer to this paradox in terms of accountability resulting in improvement of 'performance data', which can also 'undermine effective practice'.

OBPM can also influence, and undermine, the output metrics through practices that have been collectively called 'gaming' (Bevan and Hood, 2006). In chapter 4.2 I discuss the 'gaming' of HE metrics, focusing on the sensitivity of output metrics to a range of external variables. Some output metrics are prone to gaming as a result of undue influences that lead to biases. In this context the argument presented by Lowe and Wilson (2017: 23) is that gaming is not necessarily cheating a particular system, but the outcomes cannot reliably measure the 'actual experience and the genuine impacts of the service'. HE may have had a positive impact on students' lives, even when they do not achieve a 'good' honours degree or at the time of census are not working in what is considered to be a graduate position. The oversimplification of OBPM has meant that this data is not captured, despite the life changing impact. Craig *et al* (2014: 267) describes this as 'indicative of a university audit culture [...] appears to be inconsistent with key normative goals of universities'. This poses the question as to what the role of universities is or should be. Are universities a measure of successful outcomes, graduate factories where good honours degrees are produced, resulting in good graduate positions? Or have universities lost the focus of their role, due to trying to 'model themselves on private sector organisations,

universities have eroded the collegial ethos that governed universities for centuries’ (Burnes *et al* 2014: 912 cited in Kalfa and Taksa, 2017: 688). This was expressed by P8, who stated:

“Universities are there to serve the needs of students. If you keep focusing on what they give to students, you need to see that as part of the whole, or you’ll risk losing some things that are actually important” (P8).

Whilst P8 and P9 are both senior managers their views mirror each other with these statements:

“To me, you know, it’s part of the live system of the university and a world in which knowledge wasn’t translated, not just into economic activity, but people having wonderful lives afterwards and being able to participate in the society that they live in, if universities didn’t do that they’d be dead. And I think perhaps they ought to be dead” (P9).

“University students are [...] university graduates are more likely to volunteer in the community, more likely to have better social networks, they have better health outcomes, better mental health outcomes, they have higher ambitious, you tend to think what you get out of life, what is university for, and that is what university is for has become really difficult one, because it is very much focused on now giving the skills we need for building the economy it’s for making sure people can get jobs and that’s true, it’s for both those things” (P8).

Both P8 and P9 reflect on the wider roles of universities, not just places to obtain a degree, but the wider impact of a university education upon a student’s life post-graduation. OBPM does not measure the key impact a HE education will have on an individual’s life. OBPM does not measure the impact on, as P8 describes, better outcomes for a student’s mental health. The unintended consequences that Lowe (2013) suggested are not captured when assessing outputs, was attributed to the ‘linear nature of thinking’ which was considered to be ‘a poor way to conceptualize

an individual's journey'. Outcomes are simplified and therefore do not 'deal with the reality of life', whereas measurements of social policy 'should be judged on the basis of the impact they make in the lives of people' (Lowe and Wilson, 2017). This runs the counter message that has run through all successive government reviews; that of mass participation within HE as a result of increased social mobility. Robbins (1963) was inspired by Tawney, an economic historian, who was quoted by Robbins to have said 'you can never overestimate how much America has benefited from the fact that so many of her people have had at least the smell of higher education' (Scott, 2013: online). The Robbins principle centres on access to HE for all those that have the 'ability and attainment' (Robbins, 1963). However, the audit culture that has developed has resulted in counter-productive outcomes (Craig *et al*, 2014: 1). The over-simplification that results from OBPM, results in a 'loss of richness' of the impact of HE on an individual's life, purely because it does not fit the specified determinant of what success should be (ibid). Robbins stated that students entering HE should have the 'ability to benefit'. He believed that the degree programmes undertaken by students should be of little dispute and that 'to realise the aspirations of a modern community as regards both wealth and culture a fully educated population is necessary' (Robbins, 1963: 8).

I have witnessed this 'ability to benefit' many times before with my own students. Students come in all forms, from mature students to students that have caring or parental responsibilities. There are also students that are the first in their family to go to university or they may be undertaking study despite suffering from a long-term medical condition. The academic journey that these students experience may not

have been straightforward. It is always inspiring to hear about their successes, working and contributing to society, both socially and financially. Yet, from an OBPM perspective, these students are not a success. They may have graduated with a third-class degree and were not in a graduate role immediately after graduation. Nonetheless, they have all benefitted immensely from a HE education and HE has changed their life as well as that of their families. Robbins 'ability to attain' has been achieved. I suggest that this is what P9 meant when they expressed that HE is:

"not just into economic activity, but people having wonderful lives afterwards and being able to participate in the society that they live in, if universities didn't do that, they'd be dead. And I think perhaps they ought to be dead" (P9).

P6, who has responsibility for teaching and learning, expresses an alternative view to outcomes and data, stating that:

"I'm not adverse to numbers at all, but I have become much more data focused, so we will be data led. The research that we do creates an evidence base" (P6).

"We need to be data led and we need to do an exercise in understanding what the characteristics are of our students' cohorts" (P6).

P6, whose role also includes planning for teaching and learning, feels that in their raw form data can provide an insight that is useful in profiling the student, and making changes to support them. This is reflected by P6 when considering how they have used the TEF data:

"A lot of the work I've been doing since we last met is really reflecting on some of the data that comes out of TEF that is split metrics. So, we're looking at students who come from non-traditional backgrounds; looking at their progression, but also their attainment. We're

noticing that there is an attainment gap and I am with loads of other people who are determined to do something about that” (P6).

OBPM is concerned with the management systems around outcomes; as a consequence, this means ‘the more we measure, the less we understand’ (Lowe, 2013: 213). Those small impacts on a student life as a result of HE has had huge ramifications for how they eventually live their lives. Whilst terminology such as OBPM is new, Campbell’s Law some 40 years earlier identified that when ‘the more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision-making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor’ (Campbell, 1976).

4.3.2 Accountability of staff: Performance Management (PM)

The discussions around the accountability culture within HE led participants to talk about themselves and their colleagues. Participants expressed their own accountability in a number of ways, from how accountability can distort behaviour, to how they felt they were under surveillance, and how accountability can redirect their attention away from students.

P5, deliberated on part of the discussions around accountability, and how the HE environment had changed in this context. They stated:

“There’s certainly a sense of way more regulation and I think it’s across everything we do. I’ve not been around long enough to be able to say, oh 20 years we did this, but my impression is we operate in a much more regulatory environment, more regulated (P5)”.

With this quote P5 has acknowledged that HE is now operating in a regulatory environment, compared to the last couple of decades. Considering P5's role as a senior manager for the university, they are responsible and accountable for a range of both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, delivered and taught by over sixty academic staff. P5 is responsible for delivering key performance indicators and is very aware of the responsibility to students, expressed thus:

"I do think we need to be accountable for what we do, because especially given the [sic], you know it comes back to so many things – whichever way we look at it, students are investing because they've got to pay it back ¹¹(P5)".

This next quote indicates the culture at the institution within which P5 is working, and demonstrates a culture within HE where academics have had a fair degree of autonomy, which may be considered as their entitlement:

"We've heard people say, I don't teach on a Friday because that's my day off, hang on a minute, you've got 5 day a week job, we have full time jobs, but because of the nature of the way we work some people, historically have felt that they are only teaching 4 days so they have a day off. So, I think academia is definitely moving away from that (P5)".

It is therefore no surprise that in the next quote P5, in view of their role, stresses the importance of the professionalism of teaching, making a comparison with schoolteachers' training. Effectively, P5 is saying that in schools there is an active focus on teachers' training and education. The comparison with HE is based on the notion that anyone, regardless of any qualifications can teach; P5 recollects a conversation about this:

¹¹ Reference to tuition fees

“I remember somebody saying to be a primary school teacher you need to get your discipline, you go to study, you do your PGCE, and to go into schools. PGCEs you know, you go through this whole process of education and you can’t actually step in front of a class until you’ve got that. And to step in front of a class in higher education, you’re given a register, possibly some slides (P5)”.

P5’s comments are really interesting for me, since they mirror my own entry into HE. I was given a register, an old unit handbook and last year’s slides, and left on my own to prepare a full unit, on my first day as a new lecturer. It is partly the reason I am interested in teaching and learning.

P5’s comments are mirrored by P9, who also highlights that the lack of a teaching qualification allowed them to enter HE with ease:

“And they [referring to university students] deserve it even more than school students, who weirdly up to this point have had a much better choice, a chance of getting good teaching. It really irks me; paradoxically a lack of requirement of teaching qualification, meant that I was able to move quite seamlessly to teaching at university (P9)”.

P9 explains that whilst the lack of formal teaching qualifications did not prevent them from taking up a teaching post in HE, they also acknowledge that students have experienced much better teaching at schools than HE. Whilst P9 admits this worked to their advantage as an early career academic, they do find this troublesome. P5 has also acknowledged this as a reason for accountability of HE and academic staff, stating that:

“We put people in front of classrooms who may never have taught before, so I guess, when you look at that in context and the way the worlds’ going, you think it’s probably no surprise somebody’s going to have a good look at us and say are these guys doing things they ought to be doing (P5)”.

Comments from P5 and P9 highlight the lack of accountability previously within HE; unqualified lecturers put in front of students and expected to teach, compared to schoolteachers who undergo a rigorous process of training and observation before they can teach. This lack of accountability within HE in relation to lecturer qualifications, reflects an environment that has previously not needed to demonstrate accountability. With the recent regulatory environment in HE, which P5 says is more visible, this has now changed. This may be perceived to be a narrowing of academic freedom. Perkins' research (2018: 1) identified that the TEF may 'raise expectation of one's educational role' and has resulted in a 'a platform for excellent educators to demonstrate their contribution'. P1, a former schoolteacher, highlights that schoolteachers are observed regularly, and hence this normalises this practice. They added:

"Having come from secondary school, you always.... observation is something that happens all the time. In fact, it happens so often that you're very rarely on your own in a classroom....and you no longer feel judged" (P1).

Whilst P5 and P9 have both identified the issue of academic staff that do not possess teaching qualifications, Robbins (1963) as part of the Robbins Review had already highlighted the importance of teaching qualifications for HE staff over 60 years earlier. Robbins specified that 'the emphasis on research in the universities is excessive, and that university teachers devote too much time and energy to their personal research to the detriment of their teaching' (Robbins review, 1963: 181). This also sounds like a precursor on the basis of which the TEF was introduced, as part of HERA (2017).

It is worth noting that from page 185 of his review, Robbins focused discussion on the 'methods of teaching'. Bamber (2002: 433) highlighted recommendation number 48 from the Dearing review (1997), which states that those academic staff with teaching responsibility are expected to have completed their teaching qualifications ahead of their probations. This was left to individual Vice-Chancellors (VCs) to decide how this was achieved within their own institutions, and hence VCs may have taken different approaches to this (Gosling and Hannan, 2007). The introduction of the TEF on the basis of raising the profile of excellence in teaching (i.e. in opposition of the emphasis on research), demonstrates that the focus on teaching, originally highlighted by Robbins had not been addressed by institutions. P3 makes the comparison that being research focused does not equate to being a good teacher:

"Just because someone is really good at research, doesn't necessarily mean they are a good teacher" (P3).

Palali *et al* (2017: 1) measured the relationship between 'research quality and teaching quality' and found that students performed better academically when taught by academics who had a strong research profile. However, these academics also scored lower in student evaluations. This disparity, as Palali *et al* (2017: 18) explain, may be due to evaluations reflecting the 'personality of the teacher or general experience in the classroom', which demonstrates the complexity around this; cutting edge researchers are linked to a better educational outcome, yet students do not reflect this with their evaluations.

Subsequently, the incumbent Labour government at the time launched an initiative 'to reward and promote excellence in teaching and learning in higher education' (Gosling and Hannan, 2007: 633). From April 2003, HE institutions were able to bid for funding from HEFCE to establish Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs). From April 2005, HEFCE (2005: 9) announced confirmation of successful bids that 'the CETL initiative represents HEFCE's largest single funding allocation to enhance learning and teaching. It underlines our commitment to excellence and innovation and to the enrichment of student learning across the higher education sector'. The aim was that this initiative 'would give institutions an incentive to raise the status of teaching' (Gosling and Hannan, 2007: 634). However, a more recent study suggests that CETL centres were subject to 'tensions and conflicts' that arose out of the complexity of change within HE (Gosling and Turner, 2015: 1573). This included a 'lack of institutional support for CETL' and 'senior academic staff had little sympathy with the CETL's goals because it was seen as opposed to the traditional culture of the institution' (ibid: 1579). This may also have been seen as a threat to academic freedom and it highlights P5's comments that students deserve better teaching, but also indicated a culture where there has been no accountability for a lack of teaching excellence. P4, who is a programme leader, discussed performance management directly, in relation to what the TEF would mean for them, stating that:

"I think a lot of academics will be resistant, so I think there will be. Management wants it one way, and academics wanted another way. And that can cause conflict, I do see there can be conflict over TEF, and I do see the unions having a bit of a say. And I think it's more from an issue of workload and more on a point of performance management. Academics have traditionally not been performance managed on teaching and it's then getting to a stage which would cause an awful lot of stress because your (pause) traditionally academics

are not always employed on how well they teach, they're employed on how well they research (P4)".

P4's argument is that some academics have for many years performed their roles and done so successfully. They have worked without a great deal of attention paid to how they teach or even with the need to focus on their own development. From comments by P5 and P9 it is also evident that unqualified lecturers were able to teach. Now, as a direct result of the TEF this is being challenged and questioned, which P4 viewed as the performance management of academics.

P4 added:

"I think it will be a big workload issue" (P4).

I have already included this quote from P2 in the last section, but this time I wanted to draw attention to the use of the term 'scrutiny', which in this context implies the 'performance management' that P4 has stated:

"I Just think the whole field of higher education, things are under more and more measurement, scrutiny and takes people away from doing the core responsible job of actually delivering excellent teaching to their students, and spending time with their students" (P2).

P2 and P4 are both programme leaders (managed academics) who have responsibility for managing programmes. There has been a discrepancy of views between managed-academics who have used expressed accountability as performance management, whereas academic-managers, such as P5, have referred to accountability in relation to the staff they manage. Other participants also expressed a threat to academic freedom within HE:

“I think there is a real risk there that the higher education bill is eroding institutional autonomy” (P8).

“Academic freedom in schools and colleges has been knobbled [sic] in that culture and I’d be horrified if universities went the same way” (P7).

“I think it’s that sort of creep of the accountability culture, the audit culture hitting universities several years after its hit schools and colleges for example” (P7).

Performance management (hereafter referred to as PM) has been defined as ‘a set of management control mechanisms used by executives and employees with the overall purpose of facilitating the delivery of organizational goals by influencing people's behaviour and performance’ (Franco-Santos and Otley, 2018: 702). Aguinis (2014: 2) offers a slightly more detailed definition of PM, as a ‘continuous process of identifying, measuring, and developing the performance of individuals and teams and aligning performance with the strategic goals of the organisation’. From an employee’s perspective this would mean goal setting, monitoring of those goals and finally evaluation of those goals, thereby maximising the ‘current as well as future employee performance’ (Decramer *et al*, 2013: 353).

P4 expresses a concern that the TEF will be used as a form of PM to manage academics and that alone will result in stress for academics. This is mirrored by Perkins (2018: 23) who stated that ‘TEF will consequently filter into performance management and appraisal procedures in much the same way that REF has become part of the academic architecture’. Kallio *et al* (2016: 685) suggest that ‘performance management systems have disrupted academic life’. Shore (2008: 279) has identified

that the accountability culture within HE has resulted in an increase in workload, which has had a direct impact on academics' stress and mental health. In Chapter 1, I outlined a range of factors that are impacting HE at present, of which the mental health of academics is one. This is a consequence of the 'pressure on academics to comply with accountability metrics' in order to 'enhance transparency' (ibid). It is no surprise that there is an accountability culture within HE, manifested as the PM of academics, which is indicative of a wider managerialism structure. Kalfa and Taksa (2017: 690) describe this as a 'performative culture evidenced by an increasing emphasis on performance indicators'. A recent report commissioned by HEPI into the causes of stress in HE indicated that the main factors contributing to academics' stress are workloads and audits, REF and OBPM. The reports also stated that 'the TEF introduced in 2017 has increased pressure, with the requirement that student satisfaction, especially with assessment and feedback, be continually enhanced' (Morrish, 2019: 30), and this has placed increased pressure on academic staff to meet tight marking and feedback deadlines.

Davis (2017: 319) suggests that whilst accountability practices are useful, for instance in raising standards and identifying areas of concern, there is also evidence that managerialism/OBPM may have a negative impact on the role of universities. This is due to quality assurance practices seeking to 'manage, steer and control the work of academics in ways that serve the interest of management'. This is exacerbated by accountability tools within HE, such as NPM and OBPM which promote a 'narrow and normalised academic role' (Davies and Thomas, 2002: 179). In the longer term this set of factors could impact upon academic identity with the 'emergence of the

academic underclass' (ibid: 189), where non-research active staff are given a high teaching load, compared to research active colleagues. This impact of PM changes the nature of academic freedom, which for academics represents 'freedom of inquiry and research; freedom of teaching within the university; and freedom of extramural utterance and action' (AAUP 2015a: 4, cited in Orr, 2019: 6). P4 finds the idea of being monitored irrelevant given their status as a university lecturer, making the comparison that lecturers are not schoolteachers, and comparing the TEF with OFSTED. P4 stated that:

"I remember there was a lot of upset in the teaching paternity, lets' say, academics, just because they didn't want to feel that they were schoolteachers. And there was a feeling it was more like an OFSTED, sort of, you know, idea, we're going to be monitored and measured and that higher education it's not that, you know there's a lot more independent study that's required of students (P4)".

Shore (2008: 280) states that 'audits often create the very mistrust they are supposed to alleviate'. P4 is demonstrating a mistrust of the TEF and sees the TEF as a form of PM to control academic staff. P4 is very clear that they will be monitored and measured, and this clearly is a cause of concern for them. McCormack *et al*, (2013: 561) suggests that the 'setting of targets and monitoring has a much weaker association with good performance'. Alternatively, P6, a senior manager with responsibility for teaching and learning, offers another perspective in relation to accountability within HE. PM is seen as an opportunity to raise standards and this comes across clearly when P6 stated:

"Because at that time our department was fragmented, chaotic, unmanaged, and characterised by individuals rather than teams, so it enabled me to with some kind of

driver, like to galvanise teams. So, to that extent I think what these frameworks can do is raise, raise the bar (P6)".

P2, P4, and P6 perceived PM in different ways, but they all shared a commonality in terms of their use of words. For instance, P2 referred to 'scrutiny', and 'measurement'; whilst P4 also shared the latter term but included 'monitored'. P6 used terms which are more positive, such as 'driver', and 'galvanise'. The terms used by P6 imply that since PM is monitored and measured, these would be drivers for academic staff for change. The term 'driver' could also be interpreted as a form of surveillance. Craig *et al* (2014: 17) describes how 'surveillance has become embedded in the organisational life of universities', and this is now taken for granted. Moreover, within HE this is described as a 'normalization of surveillance' (ibid), in other words we are so used to being monitored and measured as part of PM, that PM is seen as a form of surveillance, which in turns exerts power on academics (Foucault, 1977).

4.3.3 Parallels of accountability beyond HE

Evidence of neoliberal policies are evident within many public sector organisations, such as schools, NHS and prisons. Participants, as part of their discussions, drew comparisons with the accountability culture of HE, mirroring that of schools. P7 saw the TEF as a way for governments to be more closely involved in the business of universities, and therefore, as a natural progression from the accountability culture that already exists within schools. P7 stated:

“If you track changes that have happened in primary, secondary and FE over the last decade, it’s far more focused on the formality of metrics, reduced to a set of data on student tracking and so on. And I suspect it’s only a matter of time before that hits universities. And then they’ll become very different sorts of places” (P7).

“Being in secondary education it was almost inevitable that wave would hit HE, because it is about quantifying education and being able to make a judgement on whether something is good or bad. And so, I could...well it’s almost inevitable that for universities that was going to be coming along” (P1).

P7’s entire 20-year career has centred around education. Initially, as a schoolteacher followed by delivering training for teachers, and finally as a senior member of staff with responsibility for teaching and learning within HE. P1 also started as a secondary school teacher having taught extensively, before moving to HE, hence P7 and P1 are drawing on their own experiences. Having met up with P7 some eight months later, I wanted to explore what P7 meant by saying that the introduction of the TEF will mean that universities will become a different sort of place as a result. P7 aligned their response with evidence of how the Education Act (1988) introduced a whole host of changes to schools, including ‘parentocracy’ (parent choice), the creation of league tables, and the introduction of the National Curriculum and OFSTED.

P7 described in detail the story of a community school that they had been involved with. The school was located in a poor area of Greater Manchester and sought to support local families and pupils with a range of issues. The school was resourced to deal with this, and it was deemed successful in this challenge. The school then became an Academy and eventually part of a Multi-Academy trust. P7 then described

how the school turned its back on the local catchment area, resulting from a change in admissions policy:

“Started to unofficially weed out the problem families, the problem children” (P7).

Hence, children that would have attended this school were forced to move to another school in another borough. P7 describes the greater impact of this decision in the longer-term:

“So that Academy, on the surface improves, it improved its outcomes, it improves its ranking in the league tables and jumps ahead” (P7).

Whilst this Academy achieved the excellent outcomes by which it was measured, there are obvious issues with what happened to the pupils that were displaced. As Lowe (2013: 215) stated, ‘OBPM distorts behaviour of frontline staff’. In this case that behaviour is manifested by an Academy changing its admissions criteria in order to remove the very families and pupils it once served, by being more selective with the pupils it admits. The metrics are showing an upwards improvement simply because the ‘problem children’ have been removed and replaced with the type of children the school wants to teach, and therefore not as a result of any improvements in teaching.

Another way in which schools have demonstrated selectivity over pupils is what is described as ‘off-rolling’, whereby pupils disappear from the school register just before GCSEs (Perraudin and McIntyre, 2018: online). This is often applied to pupils that have been excluded on the basis of their anti-social behaviour. OFSTED have expressed concern that schools have a higher number of off-rolling in the case of year

10 pupils, just ahead of the crucial GCSEs taken in year 11 (Long and Danechi, 2019). Recently, OFSTED have stated schools should be asking themselves if they are 'moving pupils who are not likely to perform strongly at GCSE to another school, sometimes in alternative provision, in order to improve the school's GCSE results' (ibid: 8). As a result, between 2016 and 2017 some 19,000 pupils, constituting a 15% increase, have disappeared from the school roll during year 10 (Roberston, 2018), with MPs describing such a massive scale off-rolling of excluded pupils as effectively being abandoned by schools (Coughlan, 2018e). Some excluded pupils who disappear off the school roll may move to another school, may be home schooled, or are in pupil referral centres. However, 'half disappear without a trace', (Weale, 2018: online). OFSTED's intervention and the correlation with off-rolling taking place in year 10, demonstrate the extreme measures taken to protect a school's performance in league tables. Nevertheless, there remains a moral responsibility to the pupils that are off-rolled. Off-rolling is higher amongst pupils with who have special educational needs, are looked after children, or who are eligible for free school meals (ibid), thus impacting low income families directly. More recently, the Police Commissioners and the Mayor of London stated that excluded pupils are 'sucked into criminality' (Richardson, 2019a: online). The Children's Commissioner was more direct by laying the blame firmly at the door of schools, stating that schools should be held 'responsible for excluded pupils who join gangs' (Allen-Kinross, 2019: online). The wider impact upon society, morally, socially and financially, will outweigh any short-term improvements to a school's performance on paper. As Lowe (2013) says these 'outcomes don't measure the impacts on people's lives'. The recent government led Timpson review, has reacted to off-rolling by recommending that excluded pupils'

exam results will be a part of league tables, hence 'schools in England will have to stay accountable for pupils they exclude' (Coughlan, 2019b: online).

P7 was concerned that in light of the TEF universities are now more aware of the profile of the student that they are teaching. They expressed this as:

"At a meeting recently, I heard somebody say we've got to consider whether we take as many BTEC students as we do" (P7).

Research from HEFCE shows that 'overall patterns of progression show more BTEC students fail the end of first year examinations as compared to entrants with other qualifications' (Banerjee, 2018: online). A recent report from Universities UK (2018f) suggests that universities admit twice as many BTEC students compared to a decade ago. Only 15% of BTEC students are accepted at selective institutions; Cambridge University has said that the BTEC offers no academic rigour. Under 60% of students with BTECs completed their course at Russell group institutions (HEPI, 2017). Students that hold BTEC qualifications are also more likely to be from white working-class or ethnic minority families and from the North of England (Savage, 2018: online). P7 follows up with this comment:

"What we have to be mindful of is that TEF amongst other things, is looking at progression and retention of students, and it puts the onus on us to be a successful university to really shift what we do, so that all students who come within are successful. It's interesting if you look at a number of universities now, including Russell group, who are now suddenly realising, waking up to the reality of this all diverse student intake" (P7).

The TEF split metrics have put a focus on students from different groups and in particular BAME students compared to other student groups at different institutions;

these positive and negative flags on split metrics data contribute to the overall TEF award. HERA (2017) is very clear about gaming, referring to institutions being selective of the type of students they admit. BTEC students are a good example of this as they are less likely to complete their course, directly impacting their progression, which in turn has a direct impact on the TEF. Applying off-rolling could be a way of avoiding admitting students that hold BTEC qualifications. That way their potential failure to complete will not impact institutions, in the same way that off-rolling pupils protects a school's performance and league tables ahead of GCSEs. The consideration that BTEC students are likely to be from more disadvantaged backgrounds, low income families and the North of England is not coincidental. If the TEF does have this impact upon institutions, this would directly go against the main ethos that runs through previous governmental reviews, such as Robbins (1963), Dearing (1997) and Browne (2010) that have focused so heavily on social mobility and widening participation.

Participants, as part of their wider discussions, made frequent comparisons between schools and HE and drew parallels between them in relation to current changes. P1, who was a former schoolteacher before entering HE as a lecturer, highlighted that these changes are a result of market forces, stating that:

"It's about the market, I'm a bit sceptical about, how are you to know how that works, in practice. But, in terms of teaching quality I do get where that's coming from, because having been in secondary education and been there since 1987 when the national curriculum standards came out, and I was there putting those in and watching how the level descriptors were used, how SATs tests were used, watching how league tables were used" (P1).

When discussing the metrics that contribute towards TEF, P1 again drew parallels with schools:

*“I think they are really interesting because they do mirror secondary school metrics as well”
[in relation to what metrics are used to compose TEF] (P1).*

P4, whilst acknowledging that there are parallels between schools and HE, was clear to emphasise that this means they are not necessarily transferable, adding that they were not necessarily a success within schools:

“But HE is not school and bringing in models from schools and FE, is that the right thing to be in HE?” (P4)

“And I don’t think it worked in schools so why wouldn’t then work in HE?” (P4)

Thirty years on from the Educational Reform Act (1988), what has the impact been on schools as a result of this Act, which was based upon a neoliberal ideology and led by a neoliberal government? I have highlighted the practice of off-rolling; problem pupils removed from school rolls prior to the crucial GCSE year 11. More recently the Department of Education has reported that the audit culture is ‘causing staff burnout in schools’ (Adams, 2018: online), as well as causing teaching staff to suffer from anxiety and stress. Teachers are spending their time ‘recording, inputting, monitoring and analysing data’ which is described as burdensome (Department of Education, 2018c: 4). As a result, teachers’ attention is diverted to monitoring for the ‘compliance’, instead of ‘to support pupil learning and school improvement’ (ibid). This is a consequence of OBPM, which Lowe (2013: 215) discusses, pointing out that the behaviour of front-line staff has become distorted, to the ‘detriment of the people they are supposed to serve’. This is due to staff’s attention being diverted to

collecting and analysing data, rather than ‘maintaining the quality of relationships’. The collection of data and analysing it creates what Lowe (2013: 216) refers to as a ‘performance paradox’, since the actual priorities in this case are pupils, who should be the centre of the teacher’s attention, but they are not. A recent survey has shown that four out of ten teachers plan to quit teaching and one unnamed teacher responded: ‘my job is no longer about children, it’s about a 60-hour week with pressure to push children’s data through’ (Richardson, 2019b: online). Parallels can be considered regarding academic staff working in HE, who as a result of managerialism have shown a ‘deterioration of work conditions, work overload and insecurity for academics’ (Kalfa and Taksa, 2017: 688). During the course of this data collection one of my participants, P2, who was a programme leader, decided to leave their institution and HE altogether. P2 explained why they made this decision, which should be a worrying precedent for HE:

“I had some personal issues that contributed to my leaving, and I very much felt that I needed some space and time to deal with those. But the environment had become very, very highly pressured” (P2).

P2 had tried to manage their situation to alleviate some of their pressures:

“Previous to actually resigning I did actually speak to [blank] beforehand and requested that I could actually relinquish my duties as programme leader. Was advised that [pauses] that period of time was a restructure and wasn’t a good period of time to be doing that” (P2).

Lowe and Wilson, (2017: 23) argue that OBPM is effectively a game and hence they apply an alternative meaning to the term ‘gaming’, which in this context is not used to refer to cheating. Part of this means developing ‘tactics to focus attention on data

production' (ibid) and this can be understood by looking at the concept of 'cream skimming'. When applied in the context of schools this would mean teachers focusing their attention on pupils who are currently working at a grade D, in order to push them up to a grade C, especially since grades A-C contribute towards the school's performance and league tables. This, Baviskar (2018) says, is 'prioritizing the teaching of academically promising students', as opposed to focusing on the student who is currently achieving a grade E. It is easier for a grade D to achieve a grade C, as opposed to a grade E student achieving a grade C. The grade E pupil is effectively neglected in favour of the grade D student. Another form of this is gaming via early entry examinations or multiple examinations entries, whereby students sit GCSEs early in order to 'maximise the pupil's chance of achieving a grade C' (Ingram *et al*, 2018: 548). This provides a boost to the school's overall GCSE results meaning that teachers can divert curriculum time to focus on another subject, in which the pupil needs more help. Ingram *et al* described this as 'tactical behaviours' or 'gaming', which teachers accept 'but only as something other schools did' (Ingram *et al*, 2018: 545) and thus considered this to be 'fair play'.

The impact of the schools' audit culture is something that P7 fears:

"You could say we just have the national curriculum, and this is what all universities teaching should look like, you know, that's the way that schools went, and I think it's a terrifying prospect (P7)".

P5 accepts that schools have an educational framework to adhere to, but stresses that within HE educational autonomy is crucial:

"Schools and colleges work to frameworks of education where, they have standard, we have the autonomy to make what we think is right for the market (P5)".

The impact of neoliberal governments since the 1980s has meant that most bodies in the public sector exhibit accountability via NPM and then later on managerialism, as captured via OBPM. Cream skinning is also evident within the National Health Service (NHS), which was subject to quality-based reforms in the 1990s. This focused on effectiveness, efficiency, equity, safety, timeliness and patient-centred care (Friebel, 2017: online), as well as patient reported outcomes following surgery. Cream skinning in relation to the NHS occurs when patients are selected 'for some characteristic(s) other than their need for care, which enhances the profitability or reputation of the provider' (Friesner and Rosenman, 2009: 39). For instance, perhaps selecting a less sick patient for surgery. The impact of NHS cream skinning in such instances means lower costs, and hence efficiency savings, plus a better patient outcome in terms of mortality and patient experience. Longer term studies on the NHS have shown that the 'quality of care was unmeasured, while waiting lists were reasonably well measured' and that incentives of competition meant that hospitals focused on what they could easily measure to the detriment of the unmeasured' (Propper *et al*, 2008: 165). There is evidence to suggest that some NHS trusts have altered waiting times to ensure they met the NHS benchmarks, since 'what gets measured, gets done' (Ingram *et al*, 2018: 546).

Discussions with participants have shown that they are aware of the accountability culture within HE, and as shown in my previous data analysis chapters, they have confirmed their acceptance of this. P8's quote typifies this acceptance, in light of the audit culture that is widespread in other public sector organisations:

"I think actually, education is relatively insulated from the change that has happened, and that has now caught up with it" (P8).

This is also mirrored by P5:

"I guess if you put education in its broaden sense, right from primary education all the way up to, I suppose the kind of education we get involved in... I suppose ultimately [pauses] it's not a surprise that we've not become part of.... we're targeted, in terms of and this isn't to say what we do isn't quality, but I guess proving quality and showing that we offer quality education" (P5).

If power is a force to control and shape behaviour (Foucault, 1989), universities can also be considered in the same context as prisons. The architecture of prisons designed by Jeremy Bentham is described as panopticon; the design allows for prisoners to be observed at all times, from all angles. This serves the purpose of self-regulation of prisoners' behaviour. Mass regulation of the public sector and mass education within HE requires a 'disciplined and regimented labour force' (Shore, 2008; Foucault, 1991a) and the panoptic gaze is in this case fulfilled by PM. As a result, lecturers' performance is subject to normalisation since PM data is able to be tracked and compared how far outside the acceptable boundaries it lies within. I had previously identified in Chapter 2 that schools have also been shown to perform as 'the good school' for inspections, implying a panopticon situation of surveillance leading to self-regulation for the outcome of OFSTED inspections (Perryman *et al*, 2017), or, 'discipline through surveillance' (Courtney, 2016: 638).

OFSTED inspections are considered as a 'successful tool for controlling behaviour' rather than for improving schools (Courtney, 2012: 1). Children from a young age are 'datafied', meaning that control and surveillance through data takes over as the form

of discipline through the 'progressive and dispersed installation of a new system of domination' (Deleuze, 1995 cited in Bradbury, 2019: 10). Foucault discusses the same principle of self-regulation in society, governmentality. The TEF itself represents a form of governmentality; the government diverting the self-governing mantle back to HEIs, thus reducing the onuses from the government, who want to achieve high quality teaching with gold ranked universities.

4.3.4 Summary

Participants have expressed the view that they perceive the TEF and the HE environment to be a panopticon in nature; this surveillance is now simply digital, a range of metrics that can be measured, tracked, compared and contrasted electronically. Drawing on literature in relation to the NSS, Thiel (2019: 1) describes the function of the NSS to 'subject lecturers, departments and universities to intersecting panoptic gazes and perpetual rating'. The normalising of the judgment that the NSS brings, results in 'compliant lecturers', who deliver results, whilst others who are not compliant are 'put under additional surveillance, veiled as support' (ibid: 13). Courtney (2016: 624) draws parallels with OFSTED school inspections, which are 'concerned not so much with a school leader's compliance as with their constructed and differential incompetence.' The power afforded by surveillance is to expose incompetence, since the panopticon has evolved to draw on fear (ibid: 628). Digital surveillance is 'disciplinary power operating through data' (Bradbury, 2019: 9), which is referred to as dataveillance. That data is now not just restricted to HE TEF metrics, but now includes publicly available data via social media platforms. Universities have

now recently trialled this via a 'new tool that monitors what is said about them online across a range of social media platforms' (McKie, 2019: online), including platforms such as the student site 'Whatuni'. Thus, the scope of digital surveillance has now broadened further. The TEF exerts power over HEI, manifested as a form of governmentality.

In summary, participants shared views and opinions around accountability within HE, that had been generated in response to the TEF. Participants discussed accountability in relation to the general audit culture within HE, viewing the TEF as a form of performance management and accountability that extended beyond HE, and drawing in particular on parallels with schools and other public sector organisations. The use of data in the form of surveillance, dataveillance, is firmly embedded within HE. Measuring metrics on a scale facilitates the process of normalising judgement, which in turn has the effect of increasing compliancy in academic staff.

4.4 Data analysis: Marketisation

This final data analysis chapter explores participants' views on the marketisation of HE. This chapter will cover themes including the manifestations of marketisation within HE, the student as a consumer and the loss of the liberal degree.

4.4.1 Manifestations of marketisation within HE

Following themes which have covered metrics and accountability within the context of the TEF and HE, the major remaining theme is marketisation, which it is suggested represents a natural progression from the previous themes drawn from participant interviews. Barnett (2011: 39) describes marketisation within HE as 'corrupting the university as an embodiment of public good', which has led to a 'shift towards a more consumerist approach in HE' (Wong and Chiu, 2019: 218).

Marketisation of HE has been described as 'a change from a previously relatively autonomous academic organisation to one based on business ideas' (Ek *et al*, 2013: 1306). A more detailed definition supplied by Brown (2015: 5 cited in Bessant and Robinson, 2019: 1), states that marketisation is 'the attempt to put the provision of higher education on a market basis, where the demands and supply of student education, academic research, and other university activities are balanced through price mechanism'. Furedi (2011: 1) argues that for those that support a marketisation view this is an opportunity to 'turn higher education into a more flexible and efficient institution'. However, since marketisation is based on a neoliberal driven ideology, it is 'not always clear what is being bought and sold' (ibid). Nevertheless, HE

subjectification to market forces creates a ‘market-led’ university where students have been considered to be consumers, changing the relationships from ‘teachers and learners’ to now ‘service providers and consumers’ (Harrison and Risler, 2015: 69; Brooks *et al* 2016; Molesworth *et al*, 2009).

P6, a senior manager with responsibility for teaching and learning, expressed their vehement opposition to the marketisation of HE:

“There are some things which I do not believe should be subject to a market; and education is one of them” (P6).

Whilst literature extensively describes the marketisation of HE, it would be beneficial to explore what the characteristics are of a market led HE system, and if UK universities are exhibiting these traits and behaviours. Lowrie and Hemsley-Brown (2011: 1081) described HE as having been characterised by ‘plurality, competitiveness and also being rife with contestation’. Brown (2011: 12) presents in some detail that the characteristics of a ‘pure’ market in relation to student education which would have the following characteristics, as seen here in table 19:

Table 19: Characteristics of a pure HE market

1. Legally autonomous institutions
2. Little or no regulation of market entry
3. No regulatory limits on the prices charged (i.e. fees) or numbers enrolled
4. Cost of teaching met in full through fees
5. Cost of fees must from users and not taxpayers

(Source: Brown, 2011: 12)

These characteristics should be presented within a marketised institution. Brown and Carasso (2013: 3) have updated and redefined the descriptors of a marketised HE as shown here in table 20:

Table 20: Updated characteristics of a pure HE market

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Universities and colleges are legally autonomous entities with considerable freedom2. Market entry barriers are low to enable the entry of new providers and exit of existing ones3. There is significant competition for student who have a real choice about what, where and how to study4. Institutions receive all or some of the revenue for teaching in the form of tuition fees, which students fund themselves5. Institutions compete not only on quality but also on price6. Quality assurance is focused on consumer information and support rather than quality enhancement
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(Source: Brown and Carasso, 2013: 3)

There are few examples of marketised HE sectors, however the 'United States is often seen as the closet there is to a marketised system' (Brown, 2011: 17), so making comparisons is a challenge. The principle of free markets is based on supply and demand, where consumers and providers have a full range of choice and control to make decisions that are not influenced by governments. For providers this means freedom to determine entry, the product or service sold, the availability of resources and price. Conversely, for the consumer a free market reflects the freedom to choose providers, products selected on the basis of information provided, and the option to pay a full price directly to the provider (Jongbloed, 2003: 114).

When re-examining the characteristics of a marketised university by Brown (2011) and Brown and Carasso (2013), the reality is that:

1. UK universities whilst autonomous, are publicly funded by the government with other income sources (Universities UK, 2016). There are only 5 private universities in the UK.
2. Regulation of market entry for new providers is via the Office for Students (HERA, 2017) and has only been available since 2017.
3. There is a regulatory limit on tuition fees. Whilst Browne (2010) made recommendations for universities to set their fees up to £12,000, the majority of universities charge £9,250. Further fee increase as part of TEF were put on hold by incumbent governments until the outcome of the HE funding review, and now the recommendation from Augar (2019) may see fees reduced to £7,500 from 2021/22. The point is that students still contribute towards their education.
4. Tuition fees are loaned by the government to students; hence the taxpayer contributes. Unpaid student loans are set to be 'reclassified as public spending', which will see £12bn added to the national debt (Coughlan, 2018c: online). Hence, the cost of fees is not met by users i.e. students and after 30 years fees are written off, or 40 years if Augar's (2019) recommendations are implemented.
5. The competition for students is high, given that the population of 18-year olds is in decline (Universities UK, 2017). However, not all students have a choice in where they study, what they study and how they study. 'Disadvantaged high attainers are less likely to choose courses that meet their potential, while advantaged low attainers are more likely to be on courses that exceed theirs' (Wyness, 2017: 2). Poorer students are likely to live at home and hence will attend a local university (Sutton Trust, 2018), which limits the choice of universities and potentially courses.

Evidence suggests that HE within the UK does not represent a fully marketised industry, although some aspects do meet the free markets criteria, and therefore more of a partial marketisation. Brown (2011: 20) adds that ‘marketisation of higher education is a complex process, with every major system falling somewhere between the market and non-market extremes’. This is reflected by Kirp (2003: 2 cited in Foskett, 2011: 30) who stated that the ‘notion that HE is a market needs to be unpacked, because the system doesn’t look like the market portrayed in any economics 101 textbook’. Brown and Carasso (2013: 23) support this by adding that ‘few if any higher education systems operate as pure markets’.

Participants are aware of the changing HE landscape, which is reflected with these comments:

“I appreciate today’s market is a very different market to ten or twenty years ago when I was a student. But we are now buying into the fact that a university degree is a commodity. A university degree is to help people think, it’s to help make rounded people, it’s to make people to be able to understand problems. It’s not just if you do Law, you’re going to be a lawyer” (P4).

P3 is making the explicit link with students paying fees, which in turns reflects a sense of obligation to ensuring students achieve a good employable outcome:

“I think when students are paying the amount they are paying [referring to fees], not to prepare them for the big world and the environment that they are hoping to go into, I think we would be failing our students in some way.... soft skills are what university education does and should teach” (P3).

This reflects the view that ‘partial marketisation is a feature of many national systems’ (Marginson, 2007: 42), and hence the marketisation of HE can be

considered to be reflective of a 'quasi-market' or being 'quasi-conceptual' in nature. The term quasi-markets can be applied to public sector organisations, who are managed and structured in order to achieve the effectiveness of free markets. Quasi-markets are a form of 'market mechanism, which operate specifically in the public rather than private sector and differ insofar as they are somewhat artificial, induced and regulated' (Bessant *et al*, 2015: 420). Whilst HE may not present as a fully marketised industry, recent changes to legislation via HERA (2017), such as the introduction of new providers, ensures that the HE landscape is edging further towards a fully marketised environment. Ingleby (2015: 518) states that the marketisation of HE is 'flawed due to their contradictory nature' and highlights the 'ideal of having a HE system that is based on a free market alongside direct intervention to make this happen'. As a result, the 'role and purpose of British universities is being remodelled by marketisation' (Nixon *et al*, 2018: 927), with 'little sign of marketisation abating' (ibid).

Marketisation of HE sector is a direct result of the implementation of neoliberal policies, introduced in the 1980s by the Thatcher government. The background and manifestation of Thatcher's wider neoliberal policies have been discussed in Chapter 2. The process developed further, with each successive government review further marketising HE, starting with Robbins' (1963) mass expansion of universities, which required regulation. Dearing (1997) introduced fees and Browne (2010) tripled those fees and formalised university governance and reporting, thus creating competition between universities. All of this reflects the basis of neoliberal ideology since 'neoliberalism is a form of governmentality that works primarily through institutions

in markets and in which subjects are expected to be active, responsible, self-governing and entrepreneurial in making gains for the markets' (Varman *et al*, 2011: 1180). Quasi-markets are reflective of the current state of HE. Bessant *et al*, 2015: 419) state that the 'centralised state of steering of the public sector within the neoliberal climate is commonly known as New Public Management (NPM) or new managerialism' (Bessant *et al*, 2015: 419). This is manifested in HE by driving competition between universities, self-regulation, measures of performance and a focus on outputs (*ibid*). Cannella and Koro-Ljungberg (2017: 156) explain that this is manifested through universities ensuring 'value for money, consumerism, accountability, strictly controlled performance and an audit culture'. This new 'administrative orthodoxy' has changed how universities are 'run and regulated' (Deem and Brehony, 2005: 219), resulting in a change of the behaviours of universities. This includes the visibility of dilemmas and tensions and trying to 'balance academic integrity and long-term institutional financial viability' (Jabbar *et al*, 2018: 85) in light of 'consumeristic student expectations' (Wong and Chiu, 2019: 218). What has been 'lost' includes academic freedom, autonomy, control and support (Taberner, 2018).

These themes are reflected in participants' comments in terms of self-regulation by the institution, which has seen a modification in assessment regulations by the institution. The changes represent a significant alteration to previous regulations, effectively making it easier for students to pass a unit overall, despite failing or submitting late. As a result of this, progression through levels of study and, indirectly, retention on courses, has been made easier for students. Participants suggested that

these changes were a direct result of the pressure of marketisation and the TEF. This is illustrated by the following comment:

“I think that has to be a response [in relation to the institutions’ assessment regulations changing] to the fact that students are financing their own degrees. The students are the same, the intake is the same, they’re comparable – what are you going to suggest? You’re going to say, okay, it’s not fair on our students, let’s make it easier, because that’s effectively what the new academic regulations do, for students to progress to the next level” (P1).

P7, a senior manager for teaching and learning, finds it frustrating that teaching is not the immediate priority, but instead a change of regulations:

“It may be a fix, there are all sorts of things you can do from a regulatory point of view that may fix certain issues. I’d much rather say let’s just make teaching really exciting and engaging so that students want to turn up and find every single session is engaging, exciting and interactive, rather than fiddling with the regulations” (P7).

These comments from participants are mirrored by Molesworth *et al* (2009: 277), who expressed that the rapid expansion of the marketisation of HE in the UK has ‘resulted in some sections becoming pedagogically limited’. P7’s comments are reflective of this; rather than making changes to teaching pedagogy, it is the university’s regulations that takes precedence.

Another example of the manifestation of marketisation within HE is evident in the way universities marketed themselves in order to attract potential students; this is also an opportunity for universities to gain a competitive advantage against other universities. Universities promote themselves under the principles of economic liberalisation, whereby the ‘market-led university responds to consumer calls’ (Molesworth *et al*, 2009). The customer-centred approach reflects the marketisation

agenda to increase the significance of marketing in HE and FE institutions (Newman and Jahdi, 2009: 1). As ‘universities function increasingly like corporations as they struggle to compensate for budget shortfall’ (Harrison and Risler, 2015: 67), this is reflected in the marketing of universities, with a focus for many HEIs to ‘embrace marketing buzzwords such as differentiation, targeting and competitive advantage’ (Jabbar *et al*, 2018: 87). The worldwide ‘battle for excellence’ is evident via the promotion of university and subject league tables at open days (Hazelkorn, 2014: 14). The marketing of HEIs is based on the principles of services marketing, with the fundamental elements based on intangibility (e.g. open days, prospectus, unistats data), inseparability (e.g. lecture capture), heterogeneity (for instance virtual learning environments or VLEs), and perishability (Newman and Jahdi, 2009: 4). Evidence of this service-led marketing has been reflected by P2:

“There is so much information on the universities now, [...] probably gone way too far that as an average consumer looking and comparing has become more difficult because it’s almost as if there is too much data to take in” (P2).

Brooks *et al* (2016: 1212) stated that ‘within this marketised system in the UK, HE students are increasingly constructed as consumers’, given that after all students pay tuition fees. Therefore, as buyers rather than students, they have ‘assumed a more central position in an economic system’ (Mägi *et al*, 2012: 3). This is reflected in P2’s analysis who states:

“We over survey our students as an institution. We are constantly seeking feedback and I think feedback is important and I think the students need to have a voice. But I think it’s gone way too far, far too many pin-points during the year where students are asked to give their feedback” (P2).

The overarching premise of the theme presented here, is that of the student as a consumer. This encompasses participants view of students as consumers with therefore a corresponding expectation of their behaviour, including engagement with learning, questioning grades, and a pressure to overmark as a result of this. Molesworth *et al* (2009: 278) describes this as the ‘pedagogically constraint by the marketisation that has accompanied its expansion’. The following excerpts from participants reflect these predominant themes:

“An awful lot of the programmes team’s, time and effort is spent trying to get them to engage. There are always the students we are chasing up for attendance, always the students that are at resit boards. The university shouldn’t really be taking responsibility for the disengaged student” (P2).

“I wonder how much of that comes from the amount of money they are paying now for this education. They almost come in now and go, I’ll do what and when I want to do it, and it’s your job to make sure I’ve got everything I need to be able to get that grade” (P3).

“There is some degree inflation due to the fact that it’s now consumer led education” (P1).

“Over-marking. I can understand there is a great pressure on universities, programme teams and heads of departments to deliver” (P2).

4.4.2 The student as a consumer

A significant part of the discussions with participants centred on their views of students as consumers (SAC) and this is widely represented in their comments. Dearing (1997) first referred to students as consumers in the UK. The student is effectively a customer because they have paid a fee for their education. As a customer rather than a student, they have customer-based rights and expectations,

including questioning their grade and determining their own engagement. As Molesworth *et al* (2009: 277) said 'consumer identity has brought about a passive approach to learning, in which students place much more emphasis on their rights than responsibilities'. Under the principles of the free markets, the identity of academic staff as lecturers also changes, reflecting a schism of academic identity (Winter, 2009: 121).

Before exploring the student's identity further, it is necessary to distinguish between the term consumer and customer. Barnett (2011: 43) defines a 'consumer is one who consumes the services extended to him or her' in contrast 'a customer extends his or her custom to the provider'. It is essential to note the distinction that a customer is able to take their custom to a range of alternative providers. The use of the term consumer implies that there is little choice available, hence a monopoly situation. The consumer is not necessarily purchasing a good and since they consume the good or services, they may not even be paying for that same good or service. Additionally, a consumer would be unable to resell that same good and service on, since they have consumed it.

This is reflected by P8's comment:

"One of the things I think about neoliberalism is an illusion of choice, the important thing is to give consumer choice. But when you're choosing your car insurance, pretty much it doesn't matter. The car insurance is unlikely to turn to you and say we don't want you as a customer. Whereas universities are likely to say no to people, no, we don't want you. We are selecting, and we don't want you. Because grades are not strong enough and that is how our system works. But to think of it as just a pure consumer choice, unvented from any issues is very, very misleading" (P8).

The application of the terms 'consumer' and 'customer' has only been applied to HE in the wake of tuition fees. Brooks *et al* (2016: 1231) describes how the 'language of consumerism has been particularly prevalent since the fees reforms'. This introduction of fees also repositioned universities and crucially impacted on the student's identity. Barnett (2011: 45) argues that the term SAC is impractical since HE implies that students need to be engaged and involved, whereas referring to the student as a customer implies the student is already engaged. Budd (2017: 24) asserts that the use of either term 'customer' or 'consumer' is not fully accurate. The literature around student identity uses the term consumer (Bunce *et al*, 2017; Tomlinson, 2017), and students are seen as a 'de facto consumer' (Wong and Chiu, 2019: 227).

Participants comments around the SAC can be broadly divided into concerns around students' own lack of engagement, impact on teaching in light of students paying fees, and the perception from academic staff who see the students as consumers as opposed to learners. Initial discussion around the SAC saw participants acknowledge the SAC and this is evident from excerpts:

"Students now pay an awful lot of money and so I think that gives them certain consumer rights, I'm not snobbish about that. They do have more right to expect more of us. Doesn't mean I think of them as entirely as consumers, but students who have consumer rights and that's a reasonable thing, so again, commercialisation is a tricky thing, where it's just a criticism" (P8).

"I also think there's an element of the consumer attitude towards the students as well" (P3).

P8 states that students have 'certain consumer rights', and according to the Competition and Markets authority (2015: 1), 'consumer law generally applies to your relationship with undergraduates', failure to do results in a 'breach of consumer law and risk enforcement action'. Consumer law applies to students by ensuring that they have the correct information on course content and structure, the total cost of course including any supplementary costs and finally the terms and conditions, including 'rules and regulations that students are bound by' (ibid). Students are even more explicitly positioned as at the heart of the new regulator, the Office for Students. Regardless of how students are perceived by either themselves or their lecturers, they are however clearly perceived as consumers by the government. As a result, students are aware of their entitlements (Molesworth *et al*, 2009). Participants all articulated that since students pay fees, this changes the relationships and dynamics between student and lecturer. Barnett (2011: 39) describes this a change in the 'pedagogical relationship' between lecturers and students, since the latter have now become 'customers'. Ingleby (2015: 518) supports this by adding that the 'commodification of HE has implications for the teaching relationship between academics and students'. As a result of this change of relationship, which arises as a consequence of marketisation, the impact is felt by academic staff, namely through 'performativity, bullying, aggression and work intensification' (Taberner, 2018: 129). This alone is likely to result in some conflict and anxiety. Academic staff are very aware of students paying fees and how this impacts their teaching. For instance, P5, a senior manager, is clear that whilst students are not buying a degree, the fact that they are paying does focus attention on how they are taught.

P5 described this as:

“Just because they’ve paid, they are not buying a degree. I don’t believe any of that. But and I do think that it does focus minds and hence focuses on the quality of what we are doing.... They feel a lot more entitled to the best quality of education that you can have. And I do have sympathy with that to be honest.” (P5).

P5 expanded their comments adding that the SAC means that this changes how students perceive academic staff and what they are receiving for their fees; this is reflected here:

“In a loose sense to be fair, because I do think that they are students. I do think that they whether we like it or not, they are spending money racking up debt coming here to enjoy our services, so I do think is an element of that. And I do think this brings a step change in the way that they see us, in terms of what we provide” (P5).

Tomlinson (2017: 464) supports P5’s views since research has shown that students share concerns ‘around getting a beneficial and equitable return and value for HE’. P2 makes a similar comment, whereby they acknowledge that since students pay fees, this needs to be reflected in their outcomes:

“Students are investing an awful lot of money in going to university, so it has to have served a purpose. And it has to have increased the likelihood of good outcomes” (P2).

P2’s views are mirrored by P1, who added that since HE is now consumer based, degrees need to show value:

“Yes, [referring to the institution’s focus on progression and employability in order to improve TEF award from silver to gold], are probably the two areas that are measured in terms of getting that gold – employability is part of that consumer-based education. I’ve paid £50,000, I need to get a decent job and the university has got to show value of its degree, hence employability” (P1).

Delucchi and Korgen (2002: 101) describe the reaction of an undergraduate student 'who in arguing about a grade said to their instructors: *I'm paying for this course*, as though they felt they weren't getting the value paid for'. Describing the SAC has changed the way students are perceived and additionally, it has changed the behaviour of academic staff, who are very much aware, and feel pressured to ensure value or meet students' expectations. Nadioo and Williams (2015: 213, cited in Raaper 2019: 2) suggested that by 'addressing students as consumers, students are expected to act as private investors, who seek a financial return in the form of enhance employability. As a consequence, the SAC makes economic decisions (Raaper, 2019) about the value of their degrees. Harrison and Risler (2015: 7) describe this positioning of students as 'consumers of a private commodity that exists to facilitate their personal economic advantage'. The consequence of fees plus the government's referring to students as consumers instead of learners, is something to which academic staff are incredibly sensitive. Like any transaction, value for money is a necessary constituent. This is also central to the mission of the new regulator, the OfS, where value for money is one of the four primary regulatory objectives (Office for Students, no date e). Their regulatory objectives state that students are 'able to progress into employment or further study, and their qualifications hold their value over time' (ibid). As a result, 'academic practices is [sic] commodified,' (Brooks *et al*, 2016: 1212), with academia reduced to the banality of transactional exchange' (Brady 2012: 244, cited in Brooks *et al*, 2016: 1214).

Participants who considered the notion of SAC, also explained what they see as (stereo)typical behaviours of students that they had personally encountered. The

behaviour of students described by the participants positions them as 'extrinsic degree hunters', rather than 'intrinsic aspiring scholars' (Wong and Chiu, 2019). Jabbar *et al* (2018: 85) add that academics have perceived 'the introduction of tuition fees to have been the catalyst for students' increasing demonstration of customer like behaviour'. This is very much reflected in P1's comment:

"The way that students are feeling about their university is different, because I think of the student fees" (P1).

Tomlinson's (2017: 464) research with undergraduate students demonstrated that students displayed a 'variability in attitude and approaches towards consumerism of HE and how students still perceive HE in ways that do not conform to the ideal student-consumer approach'. Tomlinson's research suggested that students are concerned with cost and value, however, value is something that has 'proven problematic both in terms of its conceptualisation and measurement' (Woodall *et al*, 2014: 48). This value extends not only to teaching, but students also value highly a range of facilities at their universities, including libraries, computer cluster rooms, effective administration, and the physical facilities and infrastructure in place (Chahal and Devi, 2015; Nadiri *et al*, 2009). The HERA (2017) acknowledges that as part of the TEF, the students' environment and facilities are also crucial as the overall learning environment, and these contribute to what they regard as excellent teaching.

Other viewpoints included the consumer-like behaviour that students had demonstrated; these were based upon participants' own personal experiences. Such

comments centred around students not taking responsibility for their own learning and expecting to be spoon-fed by lecturers. Typical comments included:

“We have experienced students that don’t feel that it’s down to them. And the blame culture is down, if they’ve not got the grade, it’s down to blame the tutor who’s not taught it properly. Rather than them having to put in any effort themselves [pauses] it’s quite clear students are not engaging with the additional reading and going onto the Moodle area” (P3).

“I think they [referring to students] expect to be spoon-fed more than they have ever done, and they expect to be directed to where they can find the information event. You know, I think there is an element of we are changing that way, in that we’re spoon feeding our students more than we had ever before” (P3).

“An awful lot of the programmes teams’ time and effort has been trying to get them [referring to students] to engage, consistently and they simply haven’t. There are always the students we are chasing up for attendance, always the students that are at resit boards. The university shouldn’t really be taking responsibility for the disengaged student” (P2).

“There’s a definitive requirement there, as a year tutor talking to people about their non-attendance in classes, their attitude is I’ve paid my money and I’ll come when I want to” (P3).

The discussion suggests that students are disengaged with their own learning, demonstrating this with poor engagement in terms of their physical attendance in class and with wider resources. These comments are from programme leaders who are pivotal not only to teaching, but also for managing their cohorts of students. No students participated in this study; therefore, it is necessary to include research which reflects student engagement in HE and crucially how students perceive themselves.

Wong and Chiu (2019: 229) state that ‘many tutors have consciously increased their support for students, from teaching to assignment preparation’. As a lecturer myself I do not necessarily view this as unreasonable. Nonetheless, it depends if the increased support is in addition to the support provided and if provided on a one to one basis, or if, as P3 describes, it is the case that students want to be ‘spoon-fed’ rather than seek out information. US universities remain the closest to what can be considered as a marketised HE environment (Brown, 2011), with the UK considered partially marketised. German HE provides an interesting comparison, especially when considering the behaviour of German HE students. Germany ‘trialled the use of tuition fees, these were quickly abolished due to challenges in the German courts’ (Jabbar *et al*, 2018: 87). German students do not pay fees; when fees were charged ‘fewer than half of Germany’s states had fees and are typically low, around €1,000 per annum’ (Hillman, 2015: online). Engagement with HE is lower than in the UK; 27% for Germany versus the 49% for the UK, with the Germans spending a slightly higher proportion of their GDP on HE: 3% versus 1.7% (Coughlan, 2015: online). The impact of this is that ‘German universities provide a less structured experience – the onus of learning is often on the student, not the institution’ (Oltermann, 2016: online), in contrast to US universities. Therefore, when considering these examples, the impact of fees changes the identity of the student to that of a consumer.

Budd (2017: 23) explains ‘how people approach their time as students is more complex than some of the literature assumes’, namely the relationship between fees, league tables and student orientation is more complex (*ibid*). It is ‘politicians, policy-makers and other social actors’, that are positioning the student as a consumer

(Brooks *et al*, 2016: 1225). Mägi *et al* (2012: 16) puts the blame firmly with the government and university managers, stating that 'polices should restore a market in which student's heightened interest and engagement leads to greater effort'. This is supported by Hubbell (2015: 82) who makes it clear that the student is a learner and definitely not a consumer, and that it is the university's responsibility to focus on the 'pursuit of learning, not customer satisfaction'. To consider the student as a consumer is reflective of the 'academic decline' within HE, at a time when institutions are considering their 'long-term institutional financial viability' (Jabbar *et al*, 2018: 85).

When examining students themselves and their identity, Raaper (2019: 12) explains that the discourse around consumerism and fees in HE has impacted student behaviour. Students are reminded on a regular basis with statements from student finance, telling them just how much they owe and how the interest on this has built up. Tomlinson's (2017: 465) research has identified how students share many concerns around value and how this is reflected in costs. It is therefore no surprise that students at university want to work towards 'promoting their competitiveness in the labour market' (ibid: 13). Conversely, Bunce *et al* (2017: 1958) work has shown that if students displayed a consumeristic attitude, this was often associated with 'lower academic performance', and it was more prevalent with students who were studying STEM subjects. A long-term study by Tomlinson (2014: 2017) has shown that students reject the idea that they are consumers, and that they are not actively engaged in learning. An earlier study by Williams (2013, cited in Bunce *et al*, 2017: 1961) stated that students' self-identity was not one of a consumers of HE and this

was something that they 'strongly opposed'. Budd (2017: 35) suggested that there is 'no sense that fee-paying students in England saw themselves as not being responsible for their studies', yet their universities played a more active academic role when compared to German institutions. Therefore, students who 'seek to have a degree', as opposed to wanting to be a 'learner' (Molesworth, *et al* 2009: 277) are reflective of a passive attitude to learning, which is not effective for academic performance. In the extreme, students who see themselves as consumers, have been perceived as taking no responsibility for their education and learning and therefore have no interest in their degree (Bunce *et al*, 2017).

4.4.3 The loss of the liberal degree

The liberal or liberal arts degree is often used to describe degrees that are humanities based. This would include a wide range of degree programmes such as history, art, geography, English, politics, languages, music, religious education and gender studies (Dutt–Ballerstadt, 2019). Recently the British Academy (no date: online) whose work focuses on the humanities and social sciences, published that 'there is evidence of closure or downsizing of humanities departments, particularly modern languages', partly in response to low student recruitment. This trend is not just limited to the UK; for example, Japan's Education minister instructed 86 state universities to 'take active steps to abolish [social science and humanities] organisations or to convert them to serve areas that better meet society's needs' (Grove, 2015: online). The order for the closure of the humanities departments has come from Japan's Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, to focus on 'more practical vocational education that better

anticipates the needs of society' (ibid). A similar trend in US universities has seen a decline and indeed a discontinuation of courses including history, philosophy and modern languages, supported by the notion to 'create programs that meet the evolving needs of students' (Dix, 2018: online). In the US, 'humanities are down to about 70% of their 2008 values'; the financial crash of 2008 saw the decline of the humanities, which have not recovered since (Franklin, 2018: online). This 'academic prioritization', a term coined by Dutt – Ballerstadt (2019: online), refers to university managers prioritising certain courses, over the 'imminent demise' of other courses and departments. A similar rationale for the closure of particular courses and departments is afforded in that the interest of the markets must be served, promoting more 'job-oriented disciplines', which is by a 'driven neoliberal interests and profit driven model of education' (ibid). In other words, putting profits ahead of learning.

Participants who are mainly academic managers expressed concern that the introduction of the TEF may contribute to the demise and the closure of certain courses and programmes. The TEF will increase competition with the entry of new providers and courses, who may charge more competitive fees. These views are reflected here:

"I'd like to believe in the value of the liberal degree for its own sake. With nearly 50% of the population now entering higher education, those times have changed. And we have to talk in terms of outcomes, and I can see why value for money sneaks up now, as a term of reference. It all taps into that kind of marketisation doesn't it, but we do live in a capitalist framework in a capitalist society, so let's find a way of making it work without compromising our values" (P6).

P9 supports the literature already discussed that universities are being directed to focus on courses and programmes that support industry, and this is being spearheaded by the sector and government, stating that:

“I have no doubt at all that as economic times get tougher, probably further propelled by whatever happens about Brexit [pauses], I think that budgets will become squeezed and the government will try to direct universities more and more that are providing only the type of skills that industry and increasingly the most productive, the most economically productive industries require” (P9).

Ek *et al* (2013: 1307) discuss a trend within HE referred to as ‘academisation’, which are vocational programmes that have ‘changed from being an alternative to university studies to becoming an integral part of higher education’. An example of academisation includes teacher training and nursing, now degree subjects driven by governmental initiatives to address industry shortfalls. The increased recruitment in particular programmes and in contrast the decline of the humanities subjects, has been led by the government as part of their industrial strategy, part of which was an investment of ‘an additional £406m in maths, digital and technical education, helping to address the shortage of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) skills (HM Government, 2017: 11). The focus on STEM subjects is at least a decade old, and part of many different STEM initiatives and strategies over the years (Department of Education, 2009). As a result, HEIs are now ‘focusing on the profitable areas of science, technology, engineering and maths’ (Preston, 2015: online), whilst the liberal degree is ‘dying a slow and painful death’ (ibid). The humanities are perceived to be ‘impracticable, unprofitable, elitist and outdated’ (Preston, 2015: online), a

viewpoint that demonstrates that subjects are less important than more generic skills, such as flexibility, resilience, and confidence.

The Office for Students placed value and quality at the heart of its regulatory objectives. The TEF award is directly made up of data that examines a graduate's earnings over a period of time, thus placing value again at the forefront. It is no surprise that participants, all university managers, have reflected the cost of a degree in relation to the potential outcomes for students. This has been reflected by P5:

"We've got to have degree programmes that serve the market. That actually give students jobs at the end of it, why on earth would they spend £27,000 with us and then to be sat unemployed" (P5).

Specifically, in relation to the impact that the TEF may pose, P8 expressed concern that degrees may simply be valued in terms of graduates' incomes:

"That's my number one worry about the way, when I said about unintended consequences, I thought of the discourse around commercialisation of the universities' value for money. I worry we'll get to a place where we'll think about value for money as entirely measured by how much someone earns" (P8).

P8's views are mirrored by P7, another senior manager, who is concerned with the idea that students will focus on a degree's performance indicators, rather than learning for the sake of learning:

"Well, again, outcomes are quote narrowly defined in terms of good honours, employment, employment in a graduate area, so at a stroke that takes away from the notion that you might want to be engaged in higher education for its own sake for the love of learning and engagement" (P7).

Whilst students do not view themselves as consumers (Bunce *et al*, 2017; Budd, 2017), they are focused on value in the light of their investment with both time and money. Both the TEF and the OfS strengthen the idea of value within a degree. Tomlinson (2018: 714) states that ‘the marketisation of HE is reported to actively encourage students to act as rational investors, informed choice-makers and indeed consumers of their education’. Data from Universities UK (2018b: 19) shows that over a 10-year period the 2016/17 academic year saw a significant change in the demand for degree courses, this is shown in table 21.

Table 21: Changing demands for degree programmes

Degree programme	Change between 2007/8 and 2016/17
Veterinary sciences	Increase 47.3%
Biological sciences	Increase 40.1%
Mathematical sciences	Increase 29%
Languages	Decrease 21.3%
Education	Decrease 25.5%
Historical and philosophical studies	11.6%
Combined honours	Decrease 67.3%

(Source: Universities UK, 2018b: 19).

The data clearly show that the government’s focus on STEM subjects has been successful, and there has been a decline in humanities subjects. The focus on value, and the component within the TEF for examining a graduate’s employability and subsequent income, has highlighted these metrics further. DLHE figures for 2016/17 have shown that ‘humanities graduates are less likely than graduates as a whole to be working either full or part time’ (Kempster, 2018: online). Just 63.7% of humanities graduates are in work compared to 74.3% representing all graduates. For STEM graduates this increases to 75.5%. Humanities graduates also more likely to be unemployed when compared to all graduates, but at 24.7% are the most likely to be

engaged in further study (compared to 16.1% for all graduates). It is no surprise that medicine and dentistry students earn over £47,000 compared to between £20 – 22,000 for humanities students (Britton, 2017). However, humanities graduates are more likely to be working in ‘retail, catering, waiting and bar staff’ (Kempster, 2018), which are traditionally associated with low incomes. Since graduates’ employability and future earnings are a component of the TEF awards, P7 expresses concern that this may result in courses shutting down, as universities seek to improve their TEF outcomes:

“The amount of work generated when responding to a subject level TEF is huge, I would hate to see it come in and be the thing that determines whether courses thrive or shut down” (P7).

Whilst STEM graduates may have better financial outcomes, not all students want to be an engineer, doctor or scientist. The loss of humanities courses, driven in part by placing graduates’ potential income as the main deciding factor, may result in ‘creating universal generic and commodified mass education programmes’ (Jabbar *et al*, 2018: 87). Ruggeri (2019: online) states that ‘learning for the sake of learning is a beautiful thing, but costs versus long-term outputs influence that decision’. Learning for the sake of learning is something that has been concerning participants:

“Without universities all kind of things that make life worthwhile for us would be starved of their life blood. Perhaps talking about the arts is a good way of illustrating this because, without universities obviously the arts would wrinkle and diminish. We wouldn’t have skilled individuals who actually create the art, but equally you would not have the cultured individuals who form the audience [pauses] because otherwise, huge, huge areas of our culture are going to die” (P9).

“I think a lot of the rhetoric is very muddled, on one hand there’s the onus on paying fees for universities firmly within the lap of students. You’ve got to essentially fund both your tuition fees and maintenance. So, it’s not tax payer’s money in the way it used to be, and I’m not saying there’s a burden on the tax payer, so on that basis you’ve spent, accrued a debt of £40,000 grand plus, £50,000, and just do something for the hell of it, why not?”
(P7).

Students that take a humanities degree are more able to ‘think, critique and persuade’ (Ruggeri, 2019: online). Holm *et al* (2015: 12-13) writes in some considerable detail that the role of humanities in society is everywhere, and reflective in society’s values intrinsically, socially, culturally, economically, personally, spiritually and aesthetically. HEPI (2017: 1) states that ‘there is a flaw in the logic that says to count is to be economically productive, but to create is not’, since the creative arts alone in the UK contribute £84bn annually economically. As P9 states, this means that not only would society lose those that produce the arts, but also those that would engage with the arts, creating a culturally deficient nation. The role of universities is now further complicated; the battle between producing courses that are economically viable and industry led, against courses which will retain the UK’s culture and heritage. ‘The dystopian mission of public and higher education [has become about producing] robots, technocrats, and compliant workers’ (Giroux, 2013, cited in Dutt-Ballerstadt, 2019: online). This is facilitated, supported and delivered through a culture of discipline power (Foucault, 1977).

4.4.4 Summary

As part of the discussion around the TEF, participants raised the issue of marketisation, reflecting the view that HE is marketised and thus how these impacts

on them and students. The exploration of literature around marketisation shows that HE in the UK is in fact based on a quasi-market structure, effectively a partial marketisation. The demonstration of the marketisations of HE includes viewing SAC, and how this change in identity of the student reflects their engagement and subsequent behaviour. The competitions and markets authority protect students under consumer law, which directly changes their identity. Participants are very much aware of the status of SAC and this in turn impacts how they both view students and try to reflect this in their practice. Whilst academic staff view students as consumers rather than learners, students do not share this perception of themselves. Students that display consumeristic views tend to result in lower academic performance. With the introduction of the TEF, a new pressure has been highlighted for courses and their survival in the era when value and quality dictate. The decline of the humanities courses in the wake of the support for STEM courses may result in the complete demise of these programmes. The steering by the government towards STEM courses at the expense of the liberal degree, could be seen as power exerted via governmentality, since the promotion of STEM courses is to address the government's business strategy. When economic decisions are made about the value and outputs of a degree course, the manifest impact will affect the nation's culture and heritage.

4.5 Data analysis: Validity of the TEF

This section draws together themes discussed in sections 4.1 to 4.4 as a means to provide a critical analysis of the validity of the TEF. Participants' main concerns around the TEF focused on the metrics that contributed towards the awards. This included the sensitivity of metrics to a variety of different factors (as outlined in chapter 4.2). Some of the complexities of metrics are exacerbated when comparisons are made between institutions. For example, student graduate outcomes are not solely dependent upon teaching quality/experience, but also influenced by factors such as the institution attended, course studied and social capital (Ashwin, 2017; cited in Morgan, 2017c). Other metrics used to construct the TEF, such as NSS and continuation data have their own complexities, which participants also suggested varied from institution to institution, hence making 'like for like' comparisons difficult, even when looking at split metric outcomes (Gibbs, 2017). Any aspect that is vulnerable, affects the validity of the whole framework. The NSS alone has consistently been controversial, often considered as a proxy measure of teaching which in reality is a measure of student experience. The NSS does not take into consideration the different pedagogical approaches used in teaching, which Barefoot et al (2016) described as a failure of student evaluations. As I have previously discussed within this thesis, student evaluations of teachings are sensitive to a variety

of different factors, which in turn will impact their validity (Hatfield and Coyle, 2013; Mitchell and Martin, 2018). Sabri (2013: 148) described the intense attention that the NSS attracts for institutions as ‘fact-totems’, and that as a result of this the NSS has ‘acquired significance that outweighs its validity’. In other words, an acknowledgment that it is not perfect but is now firmly established as part of HE metrics that are here to stay. This further compound the problem; weak data that is not really measuring teaching, that is now contributes towards measuring teaching quality.

In addition, the Department of Education (2017c) subsequently amended the methodology used for the TEF award between the TEF2 and TEF3 awards leading to the NSS weighting being halved. This meant that the TEF3 awards have a different methodology from the TEF2 awards, delivered just a year previously despite the fact that data are unlikely to have changed significantly in the same period, creating a temporal effect within the longitudinal TEF dataset.

The impact of the supporting statement that accompanied the TEF application was something that participants (particularly academic managers) had initially underestimated the significance of, in relation to their contribution to the final award decision. It has subsequently been reported that the supporting statement carried

more influence than many had assumed, with the use of particular ‘buzzwords’ being suggested as particularly beneficial in determining outcomes (Beech, 2018c). Gibbs (2017) expressed concern over the ‘belief in the ability of a small panel of experts to make sound quality judgements [which] is not well founded’, referring to the TEF panel reviewing the TEF supplementary supporting statements. Gibbs made comparison with the previous Teaching Quality Assessments, where subjects were scored out of 24, as a result of ‘qualitative judgements made by a large panel of subject experts’, that included teaching observations, visits, and meeting with students. TEF panels have made judgment on teaching quality without visiting institutions, observing teaching or meeting students, on the basis of a 15-page supporting report. This backs up some of the concerns that participants highlighted in their interviews, and subsequently supported by research, which suggest that there are concerns around the validity of the TEF.

Publicly available concerns around the validity of the TEF were evident following the consultation period and presented within the ‘lesson learnt’ documentation (Department of Education, 2018c). The following changes were made to methodology of the TEF, which would later be implemented between the TEF3 and TEF4 cycles (2018-19 onwards):

- Halving of weighting across all NSS based metrics
- Introduction of two supplementary metrics based on the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data and grade inflation
- Renaming the TEF to Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework

(Source: Universities UK, 2019: 8; Morgan, 2017; Office for Students, 2019).

In particular the supplementary metrics based on LEO data would seek to measure from an institutional perspective the ‘sustained employment’ and ‘proportion of graduates in sustained employment earning over the median salary for 25-19-year-old’ (Morgan, 2017: online). Such changes are in general considered to be more favourable towards the Russell Group institutions. McKie (2018b: online) stated that ‘tweaks to the methodology [...] were perceived as being potentially beneficial to the members of the Russell Group that underperformed in the first year of the TEF’ especially with the halving of the NSS results. Previous NUS led campaigns such as ‘wreck the TEF’, have proved fruitful (National Union of Students, 2016), resulting in void NSS results for some Russell group universities. Changes within the TEF methodology proved positive for institutions whose TEF award category subsequently improved following re-evaluation. Following re-evaluation with the new methodology, both Liverpool and Southampton (both Russell Group universities) improved from TEF bronze awards to be reclassified as silver.

The inclusion of the supplementary metrics has been described by Ashwin (2017 cited in Morgan, 2017: online) as changes that ‘will further undermine the validity of the TEF’, since the addition of metrics that focus on graduate earnings ‘has no established relationship to the quality of teaching’. To demonstrate this, 20 universities that were assessed under TEF2 reapplied under TEF3, and 65% of these institutions saw their TEF award improve (Ashwin, 2018). This included one institution that reapplied having only received their TEF2 outcome in June 2017, yet resubmitted their application by January 2018 (ibid). This would have meant the same metrics were considered providing two different outcomes, and hence these methodology changes further challenge the validity (and durability) of the TEF calculations.

During the TEF consultation period, the Royal Statistical Society (RSS), referred to the TEF as ‘statistically inadequate’ (Royal Statistical Society, 2018a). They further explained that many aspects of the TEF’s proposed methodology, were problematic, these included:

- Lack of adequate statistical underpinning
- The way in which various employment metrics have been used
- Lack of evidence about the link between teaching quality and employment outcomes
- Use of DLHE like metrics that distort employment rate comparisons between employers due to student demographic factors
- Non-response levels in the NSS
- The weighting of metrics
- Potential gaming of metrics

(Source: Royal Statistical Society, 2018b: online)

Whilst the Department of Education considered some of the concerns expressed by the RSS, a year later the RSS wrote that there were still ‘major statistical issues’ with the TEF. These concerns were detailed and handed to Dame Shirley Pearce, who was conducting a review into the TEF (although the review has been completed, outcomes have not been released following the snap general election during December 2019). The RSS (2019: online) highlighted concerns over transparency of the TEF, concerns over institutional game playing to make metrics fit and crucially their concern that ‘TEF awards are not necessarily comparable from one institution to another’. This adds to concerns over the validity of the TEF including its underpinning concept and usefulness. The fears highlighted by the RSS and others mirrors the concerns that participants in the current study expressed during their interviews. The complexity of metrics, use of metrics as a proxy to measure teaching and the TEF evolving to favour the Russell Group universities, were all apprehensions and tensions that participants felt. As Gibbs (2017) wrote ahead of the release the TEF awards, ‘the rationale for the TEF remains –and – it is deeply flawed’, citing that measuring educational quality via the metrics used are ‘irrational and not supported by evidence’.

Chapter 5 Summary and conclusions

This final chapter will summarise the thesis findings and discuss four critical areas that underpin the final conclusions. Recommendations derived from the research are aimed at senior university managers, but are also potentially valuable to many other stakeholders, particularly academic staff and future researchers who may build upon this thesis.

5.1 Summary

The focus of this research was to explore the views of staff from a post-92 institution towards the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The inspiration for exploring the TEF came as a result of my own experience as a programme leader, where a large part of my remit centred on ‘managing metrics’. I recall being almost obsessed with ensuring that I met specific targets, monitored through metrics, to the extent that it resulted in pressure, anxiety and conflict over my role as a programme leader. These metrics became constituent parts of the national TEF that determined institutional classifications of gold, silver or bronze. Therefore, I wanted to explore how TEF was viewed from the perspectives of academic staff, as a means to elucidate the potential impacts of metrics for students, staff and other stakeholders.

I started this thesis by outlining in Chapter 1 my positionality as a managed academic, contextualising my journey in a broader history of the UK HE landscape, with a focus on changes since 2010 when I entered HE as a new lecturer. I outlined key aspects of the current environment for UK universities, under which the Higher Education and Research Act (2017) was presented and from which the TEF arose. This outline

stressed the level of uncertainty in the sector at the time of writing (Beech, 2018a: 1). Currently, UK HEIs are under immense pressure from a range of internal and external factors. There is the ongoing uncertainty regarding the lack of clarity over the UK's departure from the European Union, resulting in UK HEIs position as being 'largely unknown' (Marginson, 2018). At the same time, mental health is a significant concern in the sector, with referrals to counselling services for academic staff increasing by over 300% (Morrish, 2019). There is also growing concern around the vulnerability of the student body, of which over 80% have been reported to have suffered from excessive stress (Brown, 2016). The introduction of the Higher Education and Research Act (2017) saw significant changes in the governance of HE, with the demise of HEFCE and the arrival of the new regulator, the Office for Students (Ofs). This drove a new strategic direction, including facilitating the entry of new, private HE providers and positioning students, or 'consumers', at the 'heart' of an expensive higher education system (Office for Students, 2018b; Office for Students, no date, d).

The vulnerable position of UK universities was exacerbated by two other significant factors that overlapped with this research. After months of speculation, the much-anticipated review into post-18 funding, the Augar review, was released in May 2019. This was another potentially impactful report. The central recommendations included proposing a reduction of tuition fees to £7,500. Although unlikely to be implemented in the foreseeable future, whilst the government remains preoccupied with the other issue that has had far reaching impacts on all sectors of UK society, the chaotic Brexit process.

The introduction of the TEF has placed significant stresses on universities as they seek to improve or maintain their TEF outcomes. Gunn (2018: 219) stated that the remit of the TEF is fairly broad; it is presented to assist student choice, as well as a way of 'updating the quality and regulatory regime; and a way of raising the esteem of teaching within the academy'. The composition of the TEF award itself, which uses data from existing HE metrics such as the NSS and DLHE, focuses on pressures on universities and their staff in particular areas of HE business and outcomes. It is noteworthy that this pressure was intensified in the early stages of the TEF development due to the debate as to whether the outcomes would be aligned to increases in tuition fees (Race, 2017; Frankham, 2016). Recent research has shown that home, i.e. UK domiciled students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds may be deterred from applying to a gold rated HEI, whilst international students are using TEF classifications as part of the decision-making process for their applications (Stevens, 2017; Custer, 2017; UK Trendence Research, 2017).

In order to contextualise the current research into exploring an outcome of the Higher Education and Research Act (2017), it was felt necessary to articulate the historical context of government HE reviews that led to the most recent Act. The TEF was the latest in a series of significant related developments in UK HE resulting from over 50 years of legislative acts. Notably, Robbins (1963) expanded HE with the 'Robbins principle', guiding the way for mass participation in HE. Dearing (1997) introduced fees based on a premise that it was fair and reasonable for students to bear the cost of their education. This was positioned alongside transparency of information to assist student choice. The Higher Education Act (2004) tripled those

fees, with Browne (2010) tripling fees again. Contrary to the trend of increasing costs to the student, the recent Augar review (2019) recommended that tuition fees be reduced to £7,500 and the time-period for the repayment for fees extended, predominantly to increase the likelihood that students will pay back their fees.

Successive reviews have built upon the previous legacies and changed HE by creating a quasi-market structure, which has been considered to be a partial marketisation (Brown, 2011). This is indicative of the neoliberal ideology which has dominated UK public organisations since the 1980s (Flew, 2014). Augar (2019: 8) states that HE cannot be left to market forces, since ‘with no steer from government, the outcome is likely to be haphazard’, even though the government is central to instigating competition between institutions. The TEF has enhanced competition, which has resulted in institutions standing on either gold, silver or bronze coloured podiums and utilising publicity to maximise competitive edges wherever possible. It has been suggested that this ethos has significantly impacted upon relationships between lecturer and student, inducing a conflict of identities, labelling students as consumers, creating tensions over measuring outputs, and reducing the HE arena to metrics, composite metrics and statistical evaluations (Thiel, 2019). The implication of this is that academic staff are at ‘breaking point’, given that ‘teaching audits have created a culture of workplace surveillance’ (Weale, 2019: online).

As I set out to explore what the impact of the TEF would be on academic staff, I felt it would be beneficial to examine this from the perspective of a range of staff, who have held various positions and roles throughout the university. The nine participants

were categorised broadly as either academic-managers or managed-academics (following Deem & Johnson 2000), based upon their current roles. Academic-managers are staff who have management and decision-making responsibilities, as opposed to managed-academics who were mostly programme leaders. My aim for categorising participants was to explore how staff views differed according to the roles and positions they held. This has proved to be a useful strategy as my analysis has indeed shown that different themes are more strongly associated with different staff groups. It is acknowledged that the combination of the binary categorisation and the selection of few academic positions may be limiting in terms of scope and resulting in generalisations, but it was deemed appropriate to provide a simple contrast for an in-depth study with a restricted number of participants.

5.1.2 Contribution to knowledge

There is still much uncertainty over the TEF at the time of writing this thesis. The TEF review led by Dame Shirley Peace has not been released at present. The TEF does not dominate the recent Augar review (2019) which is surprising in light of the association with fee increases in line with inflation. Since the TEF was introduced, there have been four Universities Ministers and two Prime Ministers, indicative of the turbulence the UK is experiencing. The subject-level TEF is still in a pilot phase, and the government is directing attention to Brexit as a priority, rather than HE.

Literature about the impact of the TEF is scant, primarily due the TEF being relatively new. During the current research project there have been some notable studies, such as Gunn (2018); Canning (2017); Race (2017); Shattock (2018); Hayes (2017); and Forstenzer (2018). The general consensus with early research papers and discussion

pieces centred on factual content regarding how the TEF would be composed, its purpose, and speculation on what the TEF would mean for institutions and HE. Most views have been negative, with Race (2017: 2) stating that the 'TEF seems to measure the wrong thing and generate greater competition', as opposed to encouraging collaboration. The TEF is being seen as the solidification of the marketisation of HE, bringing with it uncertainty in terms of additional pressures on academic staff and the value for money debate focused on degree programmes. Recent research has explored the impact of the TEF on academic staff. O'Leary *et al* (2019) reports on 6,000 UCU members' views of the TEF, concluding that it was unwelcome. Perkins (2018) explored academic identity in the TEF era and Massie (2018) examined levels of understanding of programme directors regarding the TEF, including roles such as course and programme leaders. A recent study by Morrish (2019) identified that the TEF, amongst other outputs, has contributed towards high academic stress and anxiety. There is agreement between some of the key findings from Morrish's research and this study, such as the impact of regulatory frameworks such as the TEF increasing pressure for academic staff. However, this thesis found that participants acknowledged that the TEF was welcome due to its recognition of teaching, which is in contrast to the findings from O'Leary *et al* (2019).

This thesis reflects a small, yet significant contribution to the literature. It has focused on one post-92 institution, capturing staff reactions to the introduction of the TEF and its impact over an eight-month period. This research is timely and represents a unique opportunity to reflect on the effect of the process of change on cultural beliefs and practices within this particular HEI. The contribution to knowledge is the

insight one moment in time into how academic staff have reacted to the introduction of the TEF at their institution, as an example of a new process which is operating at a national level. This research has provided an opportunity to offer an understanding into the structures and implementation processes of this key strategic initiative, from a range of staff perspectives. This included an appreciation of the preparations and planning by an institution when implementing legislative and policy changes within HE, in the new TEF era. It also at a more general and personal level, provided an opportunity for academic staff to reflect on the TEF, particularly in consideration of the roles they held within the institution.

I would like to expand the contribution to knowledge this thesis makes by exploring its potential impact outside of the institutional context. Out of the four key findings there is one that is unique to this research and that is staff development, in particular supporting staffs own development pedagogically and professionally. The irony is that the TEF claims to measure excellent teaching yet, the academics at the centre of teaching feel that no investment is made in them to become better teachers. Therefore, staff feel that they are being set to fail, through the lack of additional investment in them, yet staff feel accountable for teaching quality. This highlights perceived flaws within the TEF methodology which Ashwin (2017) identified in a policy briefing as a 'lack of coherent view of excellent teaching that informs the TEF'. This emanates from the TEF methodology, which does not measure 'the expertise of those that teach' (ibid). Ashwin's concern is that since the TEF is not directly measuring excellent teaching, the TEF may evolve to game playing by institutions as they compete. This thinking is mirrored by Deem and Baird (2019: 215) who stated

that the 'TEF is not about improving teaching but rather an endeavour to pit universities against each other in a highly marketised competitive system'. This is something that institutions need to be mindful of, and rather than focus on their competitors they focus on their own staff and their development. The current study suggests that this would be valuable to the academic community and subsequently benefit students.

Interestingly, research from Beech (2018c) who examined the profiles of institutions, found that gold rated institutions had more academic staff with senior or principal fellow qualifications (SFHEA and PFHEA). This is an indicator that investment in the professional development of staff with teaching and learning premises translates into higher TEF awards, despite the TEF methodology not directly measuring staff expertise. This is consistent with the findings of the current study that (at least some) academic staff desire this type of development and subsequently support for learning and teaching career progression routes.

Studies that explore staff viewpoints in the transition period of TEF introduction are limited and this is where this thesis makes a contribution of knowledge. There was a potentially surprising level of support for the TEF (due to value of teaching quality) and clear themes emerged particularly those of staff development to tackle challenges of enhancing teaching quality metrics. Those valuable staff insights arose as a result of the research design, the comparison between academic-managers (programme leaders) and managed-academics (senior managers for the university). This is a further contribution to knowledge since in a broader sense, this approach

identified valuable staff views across all levels, and across a range of staff holding different positions, which would also be invaluable for future research.

5.2 Conclusions

In order to frame my conclusion, I will revisit the research questions presented in chapter 1 and summarise how each of these has been addressed:

To explore knowledge of, interpretation of and attitudes towards the TEF award through practitioner accounts within a single institution.

This single site case study focused on one post-92 institution, exploring staff perspectives of the TEF. This was achieved through interviews with nine participants, who held a range of positions within the same institution. Participants were interviewed twice, over an eight-month period either side of the TEF2 and TEF3 awards announcements. Analysis of participants data generated subsequent themes regarding concerns around staff development, suitability of metrics, the accountability culture within HE and the marketisation of HE. Managed academics (programme leaders) had less knowledge regarding how the TEF award was constructed in comparison to academic managers, who understood well the formulation of the TEF award. One overarching outcome is that, whilst participants welcomed the TEF to acknowledge the importance of teaching, there were concerns around the metrics that feed into the TEF award. These concerns were around the suitability and variability of metrics, and the use of metrics as a proxy measure of teaching. Participants viewed the TEF as a regulatory framework for HE, the purpose

of which is to focus academic and institutional accountability, which has further contributed towards the marketisation of HE within England.

To investigate the TEF in the wider context of neoliberalism within higher education through perceptions of its manifestation within academic practice.

As part of the literature review, the history and development of HE through governmental reviews was explored. The common theme running through each subsequent review was the expansion of HE, coupled with providing students (or consumers as they were later called) with more information so they could make an informed choice in relation to their selection of course and university. This meant institutions were required to publish data which acted as an indicator of key performance. This led to an exploration of neoliberalism literature and the manifestation of neoliberal policies across the sector, examining the wider implications of this fundamental change to HE. The manifestations of neoliberal policy include tuition fees, grade inflation and performance management through metrics surveillance (and notions of dataveillance).

Participants views of TEF as a regulatory framework were manifested in solidifying a culture of accountability contributing toward performance management (the focus of chapter 4.3). Participants felt that the metrics used within the TEF, whilst as a proxy measure of teaching are influenced by a range of factors, which neither they nor the institution have any control over. Yet their contribution towards the TEF placed a new focus on what 'value' is (and the complexities around this) and if this determines whether courses 'die or survive' – a form of neoliberal governmentality.

The overall consensus, with some reluctance expressed by some participants, was that the accountability culture within HE, of which the TEF was a new element, was a result of the impact of neoliberal policies that have made their way into HE from public sector organisations, schools and FE.

To interpret participants views of TEF using Foucault's theoretical frameworks of power.

This research used Foucault's notions of power to provide the theoretical framework for the study. Foucault described his work as (a series of 'little toolboxes') was used to facilitate understanding and interpretation when used within particular context. My rationale for using Foucault was to overlay his notions of power frameworks, over the thematic analysis and use this to facilitate meaning and understanding. Foucault's work was not used directly in the analysis of my findings, rather it was adding another dimension of understanding. Using participants view and analysing these allowed me construct models (represented in figures 4, 5, 6 and 7), depicting an overview of the impact of the TEF as seen from participants view, and also exploring longer-term impacts for HEIs. Participants felt the use of data (and notions of dataveillance) was a form of performance management, which drew parallels with Foucault's disciplinary power. However, in the longer-term, the question of whether the TEF will be used to decide the viability of courses is yet to be answered, particularly since government discourse centres of the notion of value, which demonstrates neoliberal governmentality.

Participants drew upon four main areas as part of their discussions. These areas included staff development, metrics, accountability and marketisation. Chapters 4.1 to 4.4 analysed these themes in detail and will now be developed to provide some key areas for critical discussion. Table 22 provides an overview of the relationship between the data themes and Foucault's theoretical framework of power.

Table 22: Relationship between data analysis themes and Foucault's theoretical framework of power, alongside key academic literature

Data analysis main and sub themes	Foucault's theoretical framework of power (Foucault, 1977; 1989; 1991a, 1991b;)	Key literature
Staff development <i>Development of academic staff</i> <i>Teaching quality</i> <i>The multi-generational classroom</i>	Normalising judgement Hierarchical observation: surveillance through data (dataveillance)	Quinn (2012) Su and Wood (2012) Harrison and Risler (2015) Tomlinson (2014; 2017) Taberner (2018) Wong and Chiu (2019)
Metrics <i>Criticism of the TEF metrics</i> <i>Metrics gaming</i> <i>Metrics favouring institutional typology</i> <i>Split metrics</i>	Hierarchical observation: surveillance through data (dataveillance)	Yorke and Longden (2004) Cheng and Marsh (2010) Hazelkorn (2014) Barefoot <i>et al</i> (2016) Spence (2018) Gunn (2018)
Accountability <i>Accountability culture within HE</i> <i>Accountability of staff: performance management</i> <i>Parallels of accountability beyond HE</i>	Hierarchical observation: surveillance through data (dataveillance) Normalising judgement Governmentality Creation of docile bodies	Schallock, (2001) Bevan and Hood (2006) Wimbush (2011) Lowe (2013) Kallio <i>et al</i> (2016) Lowe and Wilson (2017) Kalfa and Taksa (2017) Ingram <i>et al</i> (2018)
Marketisation <i>Manifestations of marketisation within HE</i> <i>Consumerism</i> <i>The loss of the liberal degree</i>	Governmentality Neoliberal governmentality	Marginson (2007; 2013) Molesworth <i>et al</i> (2009) Brown (2011) Brown and Carasso (2013) Tomlinson (2017) Bunce <i>et al</i> (2017) Wong and Chiu (2019)

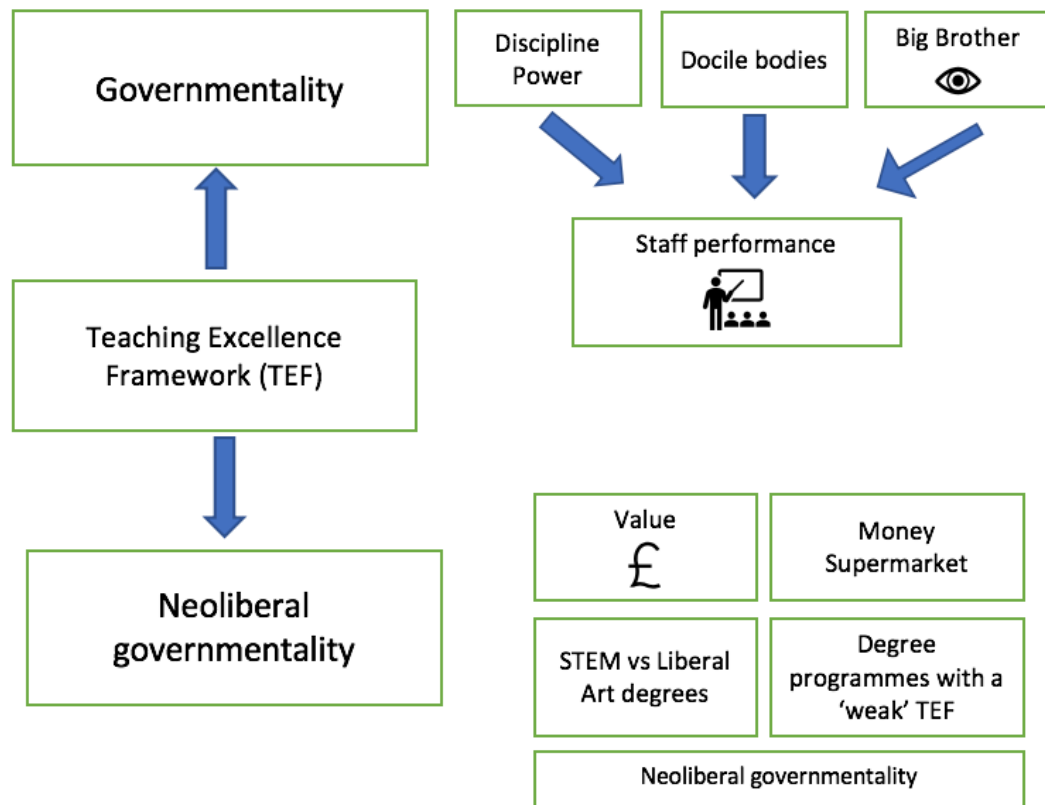
Table 22 shows the inter-relationships between the main themes arising from this study and two main forms of power; discipline power and governmentality (Foucault, 1977). The first column presents research themes and sub-themes identified from thematic analysis. Foucault's theoretical framework of power are presented in column 2 overlaying the main themes. The final column provides examples of key academic literature that was used as part of the critical analysis of research themes. Here I included new literature as part of the analysis, in order to highlight some of the complexities around the TEF. The overall purpose of the table is to provide 'at a glance' the key outcomes of this study in relation to both the major emergent themes of the interviews, and also the relationship between these themes and Foucault's notion of power and key literature.

Through the metrics that contribute towards the TEF, HEIs and academics are subject to disciplinary power. The themes arising from staff views on the TEF have in common evidence of disciplinary power, through surveillance and normalising judgements. For instance, the themes of 'staff development', 'metrics' and 'accountability' are heavily associated with surveillance, where the panoptic gaze is via directed to HE metrics such as student evaluation scores, NSS and other such metrics. Most notable is the hierarchical observation of HEIs and academics through digital data, known as dataveillance. This will also guide a change in behaviour, through the expected norms set by the institution, as Foucault (1977) describes as normalising judgement.

A key conclusion to this research is that the TEF, as HE policy, has been manifest as a form of governmentality, whilst the components that contribute towards the TEF are elements of discipline power. Its purpose is to shape and guide the conduct of people, in this case academic staff. Cannizzo (2015: 199) argues that the governance of HE is 'enabled by mentalities of government' which is facilitated by self-evaluation. This thesis concludes that the TEF, as a neoliberal governmentality driven policy is having an impact in two main areas in HE, which have been presented in figure 4. These will be critically analysed in further detail.

At this point it is useful to differentiate between governmentality and neoliberal governmentality. In Chapter 2 I discussed Foucault's concept of governmentality, which has been described as the 'conduct of conduct' and the 'art of government' (Foucault, 1991a). The purpose of governmentality is a mechanism used by the state to control its populace. The process of governmentality sees power shift from a central source and distributed to the population to self-regulate. Foucault (1991a: 100) proposed that the purpose of governmentality is to ensure the 'welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc'. The example I used in Chapter 2 was government led initiatives such as '5 a day', which places the responsibility onto the population to self-regulate their own health. This further reduces the government's burden of looking after a sick populace in the future. Chapter 2 also covers in depth an analysis of neoliberalism, its history and manifestations. Neoliberal ideology foregrounds competition, free markets and choice. Neoliberal governmentality emphasises free market capitalism by shifting power on to the population to adopt a particular rationality.

Figure 4: Overview of the impact of TEF within HE

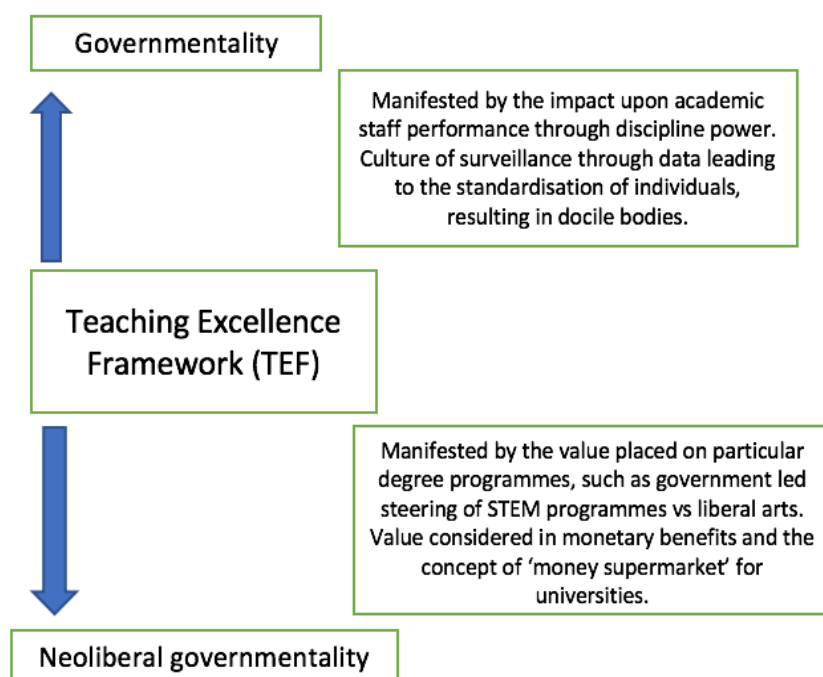


An overall conclusion for this thesis can be drawn from figure 4 and its component parts. The TEF is driven by both governmentality and neoliberal governmentality, and the data analysis themes draw on with elements of Foucault's (1977) framework on power. Analysing the TEF through the lens of discipline power has revealed a mechanism for governmentality led by market forces, in other words neoliberalism governmentality.

The overall manifestation of the impact of the TEF is visible in two areas, as summarised in figure 5, and two distinct conclusions can be drawn. The first conclusion relates to staff performance; the TEF is impacting staff performance through surveillance and observations. The widespread use of surveillance through digital data, dataveillance, may result in the standardisation of individuals through

normalising judgements. Eventually, academic staff may find themselves as docile bodies: conforming to the expected norms, self-regulating their behaviour and ultimately experiencing a loss of freedom of expression.

Figure 5: Summary of the TEF impacts



The second conclusion that can be drawn from this research concerns themes identified which centre on the concept of value. This is clearly depicted in the latter part of figure 4 and 5. Many of the discussions centred on the notion of the value of HE experiences, and the success of a student's degree is measured by monetary benchmarks, more specifically by how much money that student will earn. Graduate employability data is one of the metrics that contributes towards the TEF awards. In reality graduate employability outcomes vary considerably; impacted by the degree undertaken, the institution attended and even the social capital held by the student (Macmillan *et al*, 2015; Sutton Trust, 2018). Yet they all contribute towards the TEF,

which is designed to facilitate like for like comparisons between institutions. There has been a big push by the government to drive forward its strategy to promote STEM subjects (HM Government, 2017), with graduates from these programmes typically earning more than those on liberal art programmes. This has been supported by the recent Augar review (2019), where in the event of a reduction of tuition fees, the government will make up the shortfall, but only to programmes which it considers of strategic importance. The push by the government towards STEM subject represents a form of neoliberal governmentality. Market forces are dictating that more STEM graduates should fulfil vacancies in the UK economy, and this is being supported by the government. The TEF, which includes graduate employability outcomes, is a mechanism to highlight the value of courses; this may ultimately result in the closure of some courses.

5.2.1 Manifestations of the TEF: impact upon staff performance

The introduction of neoliberal ideology and the acceptance of market forces, led by the Reagan and Thatcher administrations of the 1980s, resulted in a ripple effect globally when public sector organisations adopted neoliberalism as a mechanism for governance (Flew, 2014; Giroux, 2010). Within the UK this commenced with the privatisation of public sector organisations and utilities, resulting in an increase in choice which filtered down to schools in the form of Parentocracy (ERA, 1988). Allowing for the option of choice meant that parents needed to be presented with data reflecting the performance management of schools. HEIs are also tracked, recorded and monitored. The increase in levels of participation in HE, following the

Robbins review (1963), subsequently mobilised Dearing (1997) and Browne (2010) to ensure that potential students had access to data on HEIs to allow them to facilitate their decision making. This had a knock-on effect of increasing competition between HEIs. Managerialism led to the need for university managers to track performance and the rise in the use of HE metrics the higher visibility of degree programmes and individuals making their perceived contributions; this mechanism is, in itself, a contestable concept. Mahony & Weiner (2017: 1) argue that this has resulted in additional pressures on both institutions and individuals which has 'intensified over the last 30 years'.

Ahead of the introduction of the TEF, over 120 high profile UK academics wrote an open letter, which was published in The Guardian. This letter was simply titled 'Let UK Universities do what they do best – teaching and research'. Academics voiced their frustration that UK HEIs were 'threatened by forces of marketisation demanding competitiveness and efficiency in teaching and research' (The Guardian, 2015: online). They went on to state that this results in a pressure to 'standardise, conform, obey' in order to be 'transparent' (ibid). The pressure to deliver excellent world class teaching, which is hopefully reflected in a high NSS outcome, is hindered by some universities working on what has been described as the 'Sports Direct model' (Chakraborty & Weale, 2016). This is a reference to the notorious high street retailer, known for extreme working conditions where employees' time is tracked and monitored, with the majority of staff on zero-hour contracts. Parallels were drawn with HEIs, where some of the elite universities had employed academics on non-permanent or hourly contracts, often resulting in many academics having to take

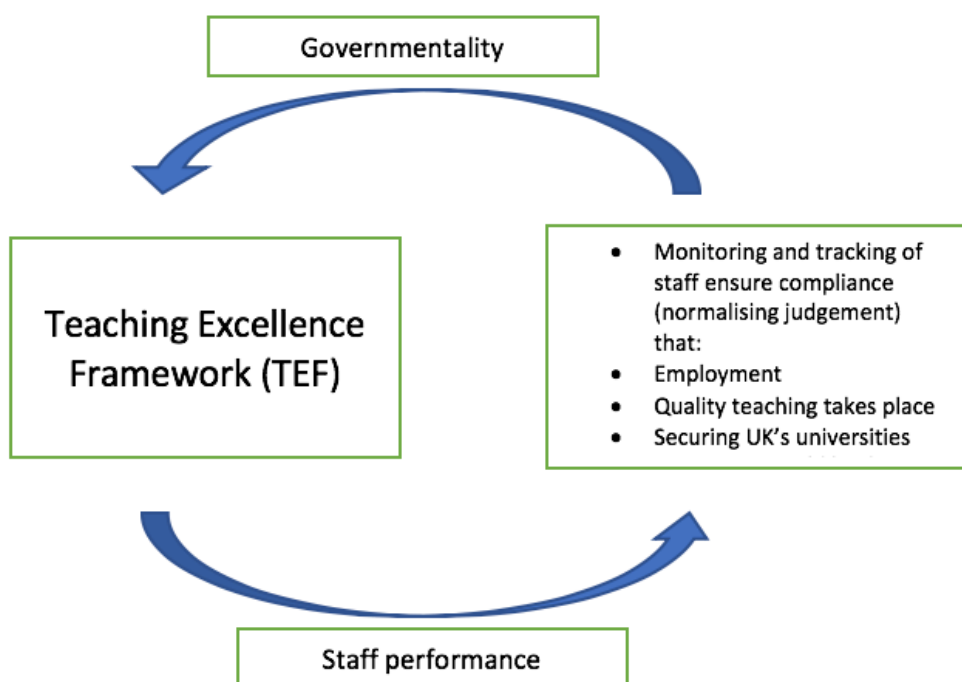
on a second job. Morrish (2019) provided strong evidence of negative impacts on academics' mental health and wellbeing, in terms of both fixed term contracts and surveillance through metrics, including the TEF.

There is strong evidence to suggest 'governance through data' (Otero and Beneito-Montagut, 2016: 14), where surveillance from digital data, or dataveillance, is embedded as part of the process to monitor staff performance. With a quasi-market structure, as the Augar review (2019) stated, 'with no steer from government, the outcome is likely to be haphazard', HE is subject to surveillance, and with the introduction of technology this is achieved with considerable ease. Student engagement can be tracked digitally, for example through engagement with Virtual Learning Environments and outputs from electronic attendance monitoring systems. Academics are also under surveillance in multiple ways; panoptic gazes that have monitored and tracked them through their unit evaluation scores, students' grades, research outputs and publications. It is easy to identify a particular unit or programme that is underperforming in the context of output metrics. This academic surveillance is the leading cause of stress and anxiety for staff, which Morrish (2019: 13) describes as 'the imposition of metric surveillance'. Surveillance through metrics is a form of hierarchical observation (Foucault, 1977), whereby the threat of university managers reviewing metrics for a programme or an individual member of staff is sufficient for staff to take steps to self-regulate their behaviour. Such actions may include academics conforming their behaviour whilst teaching, for instance giving higher grades, dumbing down content or even not reprimanding a disruptive student, so that this will not impact negatively on their student evaluation results. The wider impact of this is the creation of what Foucault describes as 'docile bodies',

in this case academic staff who have conformed to the expected norm of a compliant lecturer. This, Foucault argues, curtails an individual's freedom and autonomy.

I have outlined in figure 6, some potential longer-term motives of the TEF, in relation to staff performance.

Figure 6: potential long-term motives of the TEF

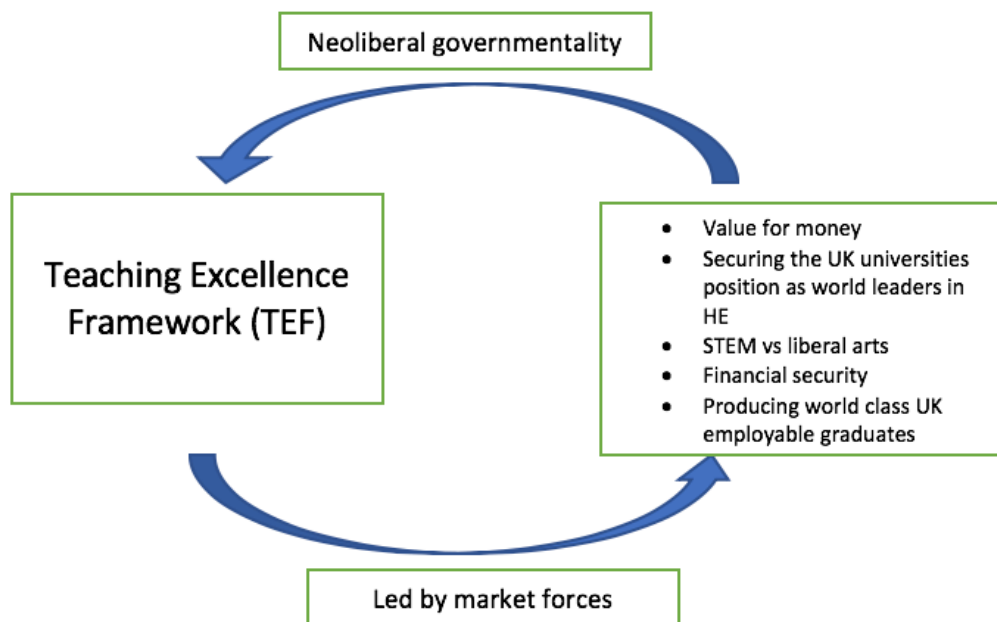


5.2.2 Manifestations of the TEF: value

Central to the TEF and the recent Augar review is the term 'value'. Any marketised sector expects value to be at the core of any transaction. The OfS has placed value at the heart of HE and institutions have a 'duty to promote value for money' (Office for Students, no date). The value for money mantra as stated by the government extends to students in HE and is reiterated by many other bodies (e.g. HEPI) from their consumer rights and protection, to the return on investment of their degrees. The

Department of Education (2019: online) has even researched degree courses, where 'students are not earning enough five years after graduating to repay student loans'. Without the consideration of other factors, the DoE refers to such courses as 'low value degrees'. Augar's (2019) recommendation to extend the repayment period for fees from 30 to 40 years, means that graduates on lower incomes are more likely to repay their loans. Is the DoE's concern about what they describe as 'low value degrees' directed at students themselves, or is it concern over the increasing tuition fee bill which is set to be added to the national debt? The proposed reduction of tuition fees to £7,500 will see the government making up the funding gap for institutions, although the government will dictate which courses it is prepared to pay for, based upon what it perceives to be value for money. The government has invested significantly in STEM subjects, STEM graduates earn more than humanities graduates and there is an industry led skills deficiency within the STEM sector (Shaw, 2019). This is perceived as value for money, compared to the liberal arts, with limited consideration provided in the context of the students' own social capital and their choice of institution. I have created figure 7, which highlights the possible long – term impacts of the TEF upon UK universities.

Figure 7: Possible long – term impacts of the TEF upon UK universities



A medical degree results in a higher graduate income on average, compared to a degree in English. However, the introduction of the TEF has highlighted this difference explicitly, since the TEF requires the inclusion of employability income over a period of time as part of its calculations. With the TEF data, the whole is *not* greater than the sum of its parts; the splitting of core metrics further benchmarks and breaks down key data. Hence there is complete transparency as the metrics do not lie, but it also makes courses more vulnerable. If particular courses are ‘pulling down’ the TEF data, can institutional level gaming make that data more attractive? By ‘gaming’, the implication is not cheating, but simply the removal of that course. The loss and closure of degree programmes is a very real threat felt by participants. The TEF, which represents a new method of regulation, will seal the fate of many degree programmes. The introduction of the subject-level TEF may be the final nail in the coffin for some courses. Further, when value is prioritised over learning for the

sake of learning, these questions the role of universities and the wider impact of HE upon students' lives.

5.3 Recommendations and limitations of the study

The implications of this thesis are applicable to a range of stakeholders within HE, including, but not restricted to, academics, university managers and policymakers both at institutional and national levels. This study has highlighted intimate staff views at a time of significant change within HE, when a new legislative change has been introduced in the form of the TEF. Firstly, the thesis shows that at managed-academic level, – concerning the programme leaders, there is a lack of understanding regarding the composition of the TEF and its constituent elements. This is in stark contrast to academic managers who have full knowledge regarding the TEF and its components. Massie's research (2018) confirms that programme leaders and directors lacked a full understanding of the TEF and that has been mirrored in this thesis. In order for academics to understand the TEF, there needs to be training and guidance into what the TEF is, its components, how the award is calculated and the role of academics in supporting the institutional TEF. Since the TEF is derived from the Higher Education and Research Act (2017), it is necessary for academic staff to appreciate the wider premise of this act, of which the TEF is one high profile element.

Secondly, programme leaders, who for this research were not research active but teaching focused, perceived the TEF to be highly attractive, given that the stated purpose of the TEF is to raise the profile of teaching in contrast to research

(Department for Business, Skills and Innovation, 2016). Programme leaders were pleased that teaching in its own right was being recognised, however, this was tempered by opinions that in order to make teaching excellent, a focus on staff development was needed. HEIs that have secured gold TEF awards were able to demonstrate a commitment to staff development and training (HEA, 2017), yet participants felt that at their institution staff development was overlooked and not a priority. Equally, academic staff are monitored, tracked and observed through metrics relating to the assessment of teaching quality, such as student evaluations, but lack the support to fully develop their practice; hence they feel this is unjust. Addressing and adjusting regulations that will assist with progression are only short-term measures. Staff development therefore must be a long-term focus for the institution, not only for academics' own morale and confidence, but so that staff are able to support the institution within the TEF.

There are wider implications that can be drawn from this study regarding the TEF, but it is important to acknowledge, as I have stated previously, that the UK in general is currently experiencing significant upheaval and turbulence. Over its short life the introduction of the TEF has seen no less than five Universities Ministers and two Prime Ministers. Whitehall is distracted due to the ongoing impasse of Brexit negotiations, and in the midst of this the review into post-18 funding, the Augar review (2019) was published. I would like to highlight that the wider, national implications for this research are still subject to much uncertainty. The TEF foregrounds teaching quality but does so via a range of HE metrics, such as graduate employability and income, the NSS and student retention (see table 2 for further

details). As I discussed in Chapter 4.2, metrics are sensitive to a range of variables (Hatfield and Coyle, 2014; Boring *et al*, 2016; Butterfield, 2018), and hence the comparisons between institutions based on metrics is contentious (Barefoot *et al*, 2016). Graduates' future incomes and employability is determined by a range of factors, where a student's ability to select an institution may be restricted in the first instance (Sutton Trust, 2018). Yet, they all contribute to the overall TEF award. The OfS foregrounds value; the Augar review (2019) refers to the term 'value' in the context of money, rather than the value of a HE experience. My concern centres on value as being related directly to what a student earns, as opposed to the wider life changing experience HE may offer. Augar's (2019) recommendations to reduce fees to £7,500, if adopted, will not be implemented until the 2021/22 academic year, by which time the TEF cycle will be in its 6th year. If the TEF metrics are used to determine which degree programmes are seen as to be of value and therefore shaping a student's future, this will be a sad indictment of UK HE. The wider recommendations must therefore centre on what is valued, and ensuring that this is protected for future students, and institutions must focus on what this means for them. At a national level, there needs to be consideration given to a potential loss of degree programmes that do not adhere to monetary value, and what the wider implications of this is for the nation's heritage and culture. However, the uncertainty of the UK in general places HEIs in a difficult position.

There are numerous possibilities in terms of future research directives that can emerge from this work. This is a study that has focused on one post-92 institution, while the scope to increase and widen the institutional types are endless. This may

include a focus on the Russell group and other post-92 institutions with a wide geographical spread, to assess if parallels can be drawn with this study. Another possible future directive is to repeat this study over an extended time period, following up on the participants in order to re-examine the longer-term impacts of the TEF and assess how staff views have changed over a period of time. I have previously discussed my decision in this study to categorise staff according to their positions, in order to establish if this has influenced how they perceived the impact of the TEF. I found this useful and insightful in order to draw conclusions for this study. A future study may wish to expand on assessing staff views of the TEF, based upon their positions, and additionally increasing the number of the participants for the study. Finally, this study was conducted in an institution that has a TEF silver award. A comparison of staff views from institutions that are gold and bronze would be insightful, as well as comparisons with other silver rated institutions.

Prior to my undertaking this research, I fully accept that I was a novice researcher and hence as with any in-depth research activity there are limitations. This study does indeed focus on one post-92 institution, with a limited number of participants. The study does not compare staff views with other institutions, but it does compare the difference between staff views dependent upon their positions. It is however fair to acknowledge that since participants were interviewed twice, over an eight-month period, this did result in an in-depth and personal account of their views. I have also provided some reflexive accounts within the thesis, especially in view of Chapter 1, where I outlined the inspiration for this research. The lack of space and time has means that some of the reflexive accounts, whilst present, are limited, however, this

research has been inspired through the roles that I have held and my experience whilst undertaking these roles, reflected in this thesis.

5.4 Personal reflections

In chapter 1, I outlined in detail the events that inspired me to undertake this research. This piece of work represents the hardest thing I have ever done, whilst being a full-time lecturer, programme leader, parent and wife. I was determined to complete this thesis on time and not to 'let it slip', this was really important to me, and represents a personal achievement. If anything, I think I am more resilient than I have ever been, as a result of this process. I recall a colleague saying that completing a doctoral thesis is a test of endurance – I now know what they meant.

My role as a programme leader I felt was 'managing metrics', this resulted in some conflict, but also an interest in wanting to explore metrics further. I wanted to understand the impact of metrics, not only on an institutional and personal level, but also on a national level. I have learnt so much, understand much more, yet part of me is still frustrated by metrics. Undertaking this research has made me realise that I am, as someone who manages metrics, just a small cog in the HE arena. Initially, I saw things from my perspective, my programme perspective and partly my institutional perspective. However, the research has shown metrics are not limited to just HE and the scale of metric use within public sector organisations is widespread. My frustration lies with the knowledge that like for like comparisons using metrics within HE, and in particular when used towards the TEF, are subject to

so many variables. It is practically impossible to make 'real' and 'accurate' comparisons, yet the stated premise of the TEF is to assist student choice. Looking for words to describe this, I feel this quote from Budd (2019: online), sums up my feeling 'for a sector which revolves above all around the production, verification, curation, and dissemination of high-quality knowledge, we are partly governed with incredibly poor data'. Yet, this incredibly poor data is used to govern staff performance and make strategic decisions. The other thing that concerns me is that when metrics are measured, we lose focus on what we are actually measuring. We measure what needs to be measured, because that is what is tracked and recorded. The scale of this within the public sector, especially schools is shocking. We are driven through the fear of being watched to make the numbers add up. I do not want to be a lecturer who is more focused on achieving good metrics, than being a good lecturer and putting my students first. I refuse.

I have learnt a tremendous amount about research and the research process. I have made mistakes but have tried to learn from them. At times, I have taken feedback of my work as criticism; I realised early on that this thesis would only reach its true worth, if I used the expert support I had around me. I have written chapters, and then re-written them again, and again. At times this was soul destroying, but I wanted to do justice to this research and reflect accurately my participants views. I really hope this thesis makes a contribution to knowledge within HE, in relation to the TEF.

I have learnt a lot and I would do it all again.

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Appendices

Bank of interview questions

List of potential interview questions derived from literature themes and trends.

Literature theme	Source	Question
N/A	N/A	General icebreakers: background, current role, challenges
Higher Education Bill 2016 white paper aims to: Address the lack of clear information available to university applicants & variation in quality; for the excellence of the teaching matches the excellence of the research; strength capacity for strategic thinking; easier for new high-quality challenger institutions to enter the market.	BIS, (2016: 5)	What is the purpose of the Higher Education bill 2016?
Good teaching - broadly defined to include learning environment, student support, course design, career preparations and 'soft skills', as well as what happens in the lecture there or lab pays dividends in terms of outcomes for students.	BIS, (2016: 11)	How would you define good teaching? What contributes to good teaching?
OfS will measure the following metrics: graduate employment; progression to professional jobs or PG study, student retention levels, student completion levels, student recruitment level, degree outcomes, entry requirements, NSS results, TEF scores.	BIS (2016: 34)	Do you think the change from HEFCE & OFFA to Office for Students as a regulator, will be more student focused, will champion higher education institutions?
OfS be explicitly pro-competition and pro student choice and will make sure that a high-quality education experience is available for students from all backgrounds.	BIS (2016:15)	

Teaching quality can be measured via: students assess their satisfaction with their courses; retention rates, contact hours, employment rates.	BIS (2016: 46)	What metrics contribute to teaching quality? Can these metrics reliable indications of teaching quality?
TEF - providers must provide evidence of widening participation commitment. PM commitment to double the proportion of disadvantaged students entering higher education by 2020. Add in literature about gaming TEF from BIS 2016	BIS (2016: 49, 41);	Disadvantaged students traditionally have weaker retention and progression rates. What teaching and learning changes can the institution make to ensure that these students exceed?
Higher ratings will carry reputational weight and not financial weight.	BIS (2016: 50)	What does Manchester Met's silver awards mean for the institution? How will employers interpret an institutions' TEF award? Will the reputational weight of a institution, impact the employability success of a graduating student?
Proud of silver, ambitious for Gold Vice Chancellor's blog - to achieve gold award need to focus on 'progression and employability'.	MMU (2017) MMU (2017)	Vice Chancellor Professor Press, reaction to Manchester Met's silver TEF award is 'Proud of silver, ambitious for Gold'. How will the Institution achieve this? How do you think approaches to teaching and learning will change in order to address progression and employability? Will there be a cultural shift within the institution to achieve this?
New managerialism, more recently the alternative conception of 'new public management', have led to organisational and cultural changes in public services organisations. New managerialism seeks to establish cultural changes through a regime of managerial discipline and control within public sectors.	Deem and Brehony (2005: 217) Dumenil and Levy (2011)	Is the new Higher Education Bill, and therefore TEF an extension of new public management? What do you think may be the cultural changes within the institution, that arise as a result of TEF?

<p>The language of teaching excellence is problematic. Excellence is a contested concept.</p> <p>Excellence has become ubiquitous as a popular slogan</p>	<p>Wood and Su (2017: 453)</p> <p>Clegg (2007: 91)</p>	<p>What do you think the 'excellence', in TEF means?</p> <p>Is there ambiguity around the term excellence?</p>
<p>The White paper is an attempt to rebalance the dominance of research via REF, by raising the status of teaching through the introduction of TEF.</p> <p>Academic practices of teaching, scholar's activity and research are inter-connected.</p>	<p>BIS (2016)</p> <p>Wood and Su (2017: 452)</p>	<p>Will TEF simply acknowledge the importance of teaching?</p> <p>Has teaching been the poor relation to research, and hence not always the focus of institutions?</p> <p>Should teaching and research been seen as the role of academic, as opposed to have to select one or another?</p>
<p>There are problems with using the metrics as measures of teaching quality.</p>	<p>Gibbs <i>et al</i> (2016)</p>	<p>Can metrics really measure excellent teaching or provide a reflection of excellent teaching?</p>
<p>Strength of Higher Education system has been the diversity of opportunities it provides. The very nature of higher education varies highly between disciplines, from intensive lab-based science projects to one on one tutoring for aspiring artists and musicians.</p> <p>HEFCE, which has been commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to implement the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), will encourage a wide range of higher education providers to take part in the pilots, whether or not they have already participated in the TEF. Universities and colleges will be able to apply, and between 30 and 40 will be selected from across the UK higher education sector. The findings from the pilots will help ensure that the design of TEF at subject level is informed by thorough evidence and experience of how different options work in practice.</p>	<p>Boxall (2016)</p> <p>HEFCE (2017: online)</p>	<p>Can TEF be standardised, and hence excellence teaching be standardised across all disciplines?</p> <p>Will subject level TEF's take into the consideration the diversity of teaching across all areas of practice?</p> <p>After the initial subject level TEF awards, do you think that subjects that score poorly under the award are more likely to be removed from the institutions?</p>

Each workplace has its own geography, political structure and culture...indicative of the limitation of seeking to develop employability skills outside of the workplace in any case.	Le Maistre and Pare (2004: 46), cited in Frankham (2016: 3)	Is there too much of an onerous on institutions to address employability within programmes?
The connections between skills' development and getting a job are so entwined that university is elevated to a panacea.	Kalfa and Taska (2017)	Do the government view institutions as a panacea to address economic skills shortages?
Requirement to embed employability targets across all lectures / modules in a degree and contributing to short courses on the subject. Employability initiatives and employability committees - academic led within institutions.	Frankham (2016: 4)	The graduate outcomes embedded within unit specifications - do these contribute towards the Manchester Met addressing employability within its' graduates?
English students view an upper second-class degree was an absolute requirement because that's what employers want.	Budd (2017)	Has higher education contributed to focusing students' minds on securing employment?
Students see themselves both as the principal actor in their degree.	Budd (2017)	Should institutions carry the burden of responsibility is students fail to achieve a good honours degree or their desired graduate position?
Students are becoming less independent, less capable of initiative, less capable of thinking for themselves over time. These are all attributes that employers want.	Frankham (2015)	How can institutions inspire and motivate students to use their initiatives, thus developing graduates that employers want?
Green paper states that students have 'suffered from degree inflation'.	BIS (2015: 12)	Have established metrics, such as NSS and DHLE, contributed to a degree of grade inflation?
Rigour and stretch to aid assessors in making judgements in this area and allow providers that are taking genuine steps to tackle grade inflation to be recognised for doing so.	Department for Education (2017: 4)	Is grade inflation a result of just excellent teaching and changes in pedagogy as opposed to enhancing metrics? Is the intellectual challenge of a university degree diminishing?

<p>Neoliberal ideology - famously associated with the 1980's governments of Reagan and Thatcher, is based upon the principals of economic liberalisation and decentralisation, including: free trade, open markets privatisation and deregulation.</p> <p>New public form has become normal practice across public education, non-governmental organisations and then non-profit sector.</p>	<p>Giroux (2010); Bessant <i>et al</i> (2015)</p>	<p>Are the principle and elements of TEF an extension of neoliberal ideology?</p> <p>Is there a neoliberal climate within Higher Education?</p>
<p>Criticism of HE for undermining its core values through choosing to uphold the neoliberal ethos and for the inevitable trade-offs faced with other values such as social justice.</p>	<p>Bessant <i>et al</i> (2015)</p>	<p>Will the teaching excellence framework, compromise the true values of higher education, as a result of uploading neoliberal agendas?</p>
<p>As students become more focused in getting a financial return for their money, and universities become more anxious about securing student numbers, perceived poorer performing universities subjects in terms of student recruitment in graduate employment prospects are more vulnerable to closure.</p>	<p>Molesworth <i>et al</i> (2009); Delucchi and Korgen (2002)</p>	<p>As a result of the teaching excellence framework, do you think that poorer performing courses our liable to be shut down in order to improve the institutions overall TEF score?</p>
<p>A key feature of the higher education bill which will enable the creation of more new universities so that students can choose from a wider range of institutions. Barriers will be removed for high-quality providers to enter the market with degree awarding powers.</p>	<p>BIS (2016: 21)</p>	<p>Giving that under the higher education bill, new institutions will be given degree awarding powers, how would this impact the teaching and learning culture within the established institutions?</p>
<p>New public management reforms have become normal practice across public institutions and the non-profit sector. This renders higher education to a bonus fide capitalist market - this produces commodities subject to buyer Seller relationships.</p>	<p>Marginson (2013)</p>	<p>Will the introduction of the higher education bill, simply consolidate the relationship of the student as the buyer and the university as the supplier and therefore make a student customer?</p>
<p>Management ideologies do seem to serve the interest of manager academics, and help cement relationships if power and dominance, even in the context like universities which are not traditionally associated with the dominance of management.</p>	<p>Deem and Brehony (2005: 217)</p>	<p>Do you think there's a possibility that TEF could be used by institutions to control academic staff, and therefore academic freedom?</p> <p>Do academics that do not hold a management position (academic managers), within their institution, fully understand the higher education bill and TEF?</p>

Central to the academic identity schism is the notion person - organisation values fit and the degree to which the ideologies and values of academics are congruent (academic manager) or incongruent (the managed academic) with the prevailing discourse of corporate managerialism.	Winter (2009: 121)	Is there a difference in values between academic managers and managed academic that will result in differences over what TEF means?
Critical pedagogy opposes approaches to education that are based on political and / or economic imperatives.	Ingleby (2015: 519)	Will there be a shift in pedagogy following TEF?
Teaching should be based on a pedagogy in which 'all grow'.	Freire and Freire (1996)	
The higher education system in England witnesses the echoes of this past elitist heritage with the Russell group universities. These universities are associated with traditional professional degrees, contrast with the post 92 universities, former polytechnics which, offer more vocational qualifications.	Ingleby (2015: 522)	Will TEF be able to level the playing field, so that institutions cannot distinguish themselves with their elitist heritage?
Altered self-image among academics, as a result of the changing conditions where, notions of academic freedom, autonomy and purpose are weakened. There is an impact on the University's role as free and critical voice.	Taberner (2018)	Do academics feel that TEF and the higher education bill, will simply erode academic freedom, and hence lose the ethos of institutions as a free and critical voice?
Marketisation of higher education is described as a threat to a department's own educational culture.	Ek <i>et al</i> (2013)	Is marketisation eroding educational culture within institutions?
Weighting of the NSS metric has been halved for the purpose of determining the initial hypothesis	Department for Education (2017: 3)	Will the decrease in the weighting of NSS results, mean that the TEF will favour elitist institutions, when post 92 institutions fair better in NSS?
Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data - supplementary metrics from LEO data will be used in order to exploit the rich data about graduate employment.	Department for Education (2017: 4)	The addition of LEO data means students' earnings will be considered after graduation - not just their employment. How will this impact teaching of courses that are more vocational based?

Participant Information Sheet

Sehar Graham (10995396)

Doctorate in Education thesis research

Overview of the Participant Information sheet

This participant information sheet will present what my research study is about, the structure of how I will carry out my research, the outputs and crucially your involvement. This will provide you with further information about what I want to do, and therefore for you to make an informed decision to take part.

Study Title

The influence of teaching excellence framework (TEF) on the teaching and learning culture within a post 92 institution.

I would like to..

..... invite you to take part in a research study that will contribute to my thesis for Doctorate in Education. I would be grateful if you could please read this participant information sheet, that outlines further information regarding what the study entails. You are free to decide to participate or not.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study will contribute to my doctoral thesis, which aims to examine how TEF may influence learning and teaching within a post '92 institution. The purpose of this research project is to, via discourse analysis; interpret the government documentation in relation to TEF, in addition to the institution's own TEF submission. Following on the institution's TEF award, the study will seek to identify what the immediate impact of this TEF award will be upon teaching learning and culture. A follow up interview with the same participants, will identify, what if any, changes are taking place within the institution following the TEF awards and how these are being manifested. The contribution of this study therefore will be an opportunity to capture how an institution has reacted to its' TEF award and strategies long-term.

Why have I been invited?

You have been selected to participate in this study because you are employed within a post '92 higher education institution. You may be a strategic member of staff who holds a management position, or you are an academic who is heavily student focused. In total, there will be seven participants involved in this study.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide. I will describe the study and go through the information sheet, which I will give to you. I will then ask you to sign a consent form to show you agreed to take part. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

I would like to interview you twice for my study. The first occasion will be in October 2017. This will be followed by a second interview that will take place between March and April 2018. I will work to your availability to schedule these interviews, which will ideally take place on campus. The interview can place in my private office, your private office (if applicable) or a public space, such as on campus cafes. The interviews will semi – structured in nature and will last between 30 minutes to 60 minutes.

Each interview will be audio recorded and subsequently transcribed. All participant information will be coded and anonymised – your real name will not be used. You are welcome to read a copy of your transcript if you wish.

Expenses and payments?

There are no payments for taking part in the study.

What will I have to do?

No specific preparation other than your views and thoughts on the teaching excellence framework and the TEF award for your institution.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

I am exploring issues in terms of your views in relation to the Higher education bill and outcomes of TEF awards. I am also based at the same institution as your, so you may know me and the role I occupy as a full-time member of staff. I will ensure that all data will be anonymised to protect identities and treated confidentially.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

I cannot promise the study will help you but the information I get from the study will help to increase the understanding of how the TEF award is interpreted within an institution; and subsequently what this means for practice in terms of learning and teaching.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have any further concerns, please contact my Director of Studies:

Director of Studies: Dr Mark Peace email: m.peace@mmu.ac.uk

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

I will maintain your confidentiality before, during and after the study. Your data will be stored safely and will not be released to any third parties. In addition, all interviews will be transcribed and coded to protect participants' anonymity. All recorded data will be securely stored and password protected for additional security. This will be stored on another device, which is located at my residence and away from the institution. Upon successful completion of the thesis, the data will be destroyed, and securely disposed of.

What will happen if I don't carry on with the study?

If you withdraw from the study, I will destroy all your identifiable samples / audio interviews and transcriptions. Your data will not be used in my research. Confidentiality and anonymity will always remain in place.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will form my thesis, which I will submit for my award for Doctorate in Education. I must stress that within the thesis you will not be identified in any way, since all participants will be coded to disguise their identities. I would also like your consent to use your data in many potential journal publications or conference presentations.

Who is organising or sponsoring the research?

This study is part of my doctoral thesis for the Doctor of Education award, which is funded by Manchester Metropolitan University doctoral programme.

Thank you for taking the time to read this document.

Further information and contact details:

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Director of Studies: Dr Mark Peace email: m.peace@mmu.ac.uk

Consent form



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Consent Form



Title of Project: The influence of teaching excellence framework (TEF) on the teaching and learning culture within a post 92 institution.

Name of Researcher: Sehar Graham

Participant Identification Code for this project: Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the interview procedure.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason to the named researcher.
3. I understand that my responses will be sound recorded and used for analysis for this research project.
4. I give/do not give permission for my interview recording to be archived as part of this research project, making it available to future researchers.
5. I understand that my responses will remain anonymous.
6. I agree to take part in the above research project.
7. I understand that at my request a transcript of my interview can be made available to me.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Sehar Graham
Researcher

Date

Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Once this has been signed, you will receive a copy of your signed and dated consent form and information sheet by post.